

The Singularity of the Affective Body: Incorporation and Orientation in the French Phenomenological Reception of Husserl.

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Declaration

I, Kristin Ropstad, declare that, except for all citations referenced in the text, the work contained herein is my own.

Abstract of Thesis

Since the inception of phenomenological philosophy at the outset of the 20th century, it has spurred a number of responses and developments. As a supposed 'radicalisation of philosophy', in the specification of philosophy as 'practice', it set its focus with a 'return to experience'. However, as the development into various forms of phenomenology brought to light, the practice of classical phenomenology involved a 'scientism' that leads to specific impasses. Husserlian phenomenological methodology, beyond developments and differences in subject matter and emphasis between the earlier and later works, ultimately rests on problematic premises: the return to the 'experiences of thinking and knowing' relied on a supposition of rational intuitive knowledge based in a correlation of 'eidetic seeing' and a determinable essence of things. Classical phenomenology operates with an ultimately reductive account of cognition, insofar as the focus remains with the rationality of a thought in supposed adequation to itself and the essential generalities ultimately referable to it.

This thesis takes up the question of the missing aspect in classical phenomenology's inadequate account of cognition and genesis. It does so by engaging with a specific response to classical phenomenology according to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Michel Henry and Emmanuel Levinas's and Jacques Derrida's reading of Husserl. The thesis addresses these writers in the capacity that their work comes together in a particular approach to embodiment or corporeality, which identifies the aporias that inform the determinations and theoretical assumptions of classical phenomenology. To this extent their work represents a singular French response to Husserl, operating close to the phenomenological discourse. Bringing together these approaches to embodiment sheds light on the manner in which classical phenomenology operates with a reductive account of language and signification and allows me to ask the question of *immanent genesis*. A re-examination of genesis is brought about through the specific orientation pertaining to the question of genesis in the work of Deleuze, Henry, Levinas and Derrida.

The re-orientation of certain premises of classical phenomenology undermines some of its central tenets and thematisation. The re-orientation demonstrates that a tradition of thought, culminating in classical phenomenology, operates according to a certain forgetfulness of the subjective body, of sensibility or the body in thought, which prevents an adequate account of genesis and language/signification. This thesis argues that these specific approaches to embodiment and language provide an adequate notion of immanent genesis, and opens up a space for a re-examination of and challenge to the orientation of T/thought with regard to its presumptions regarding genesis and meaning. The thesis concludes with a consideration of the art of Henri Michaux, and argues that this specific reception of classical phenomenology develops an understanding of genesis that is crucial to understanding this work.

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Abbreviations

Page references to some frequently used texts are preceded by the following abbreviations. The editions used are those listed in the “Bibliography” section at the end of the thesis.

By Jacques Derrida:

| | |
|-----|---|
| GS | “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” |
| IOG | <i>Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: An Introduction</i> |
| MB | <i>Memoirs of the Blind</i> |
| SP | <i>Speech and Phenomena</i> |

By Eugen Fink:

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| PPH | “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism” |
|-----|--|

By Maurice Merleau-Ponty:

| | |
|----|--|
| IL | “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence” |
| VI | <i>The Visible and the Invisible</i> |
| WN | <i>Working Notes Following the Visible and the Invisible</i> |

By Michel Henry:

| | |
|-----|---|
| EM | <i>The Essence of Manifestation</i> |
| PL | “Material Phenomenology and Language: or Pathos and Language” |
| PPB | <i>Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body</i> |

By Emmanuel Levinas:

| | |
|-----|---|
| OB | <i>Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence</i> |
| SS | “Signification and Sense” |
| TI | <i>Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority</i> |
| TO | <i>Time and the Other</i> |
| TRO | “The Trace of the Other” |

By Gilles Deleuze:

| | |
|----|--|
| DR | <i>Difference and Repetition</i> |
| EP | <i>Expressionism in Philosophy</i> |
| LB | <i>The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque</i> |
| LS | <i>The Logic of Sense</i> |
| WP | <i>What is Philosophy?</i> |
| SP | <i>Spinoza: Practical Philosophy</i> |

By Donn Welton:

| | |
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| OM | <i>The Origins of Meaning: A Critical Study of the Thresholds of Husserlian Phenomenology</i> |
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Introduction

Is it so certain that the entire will is practical reason in the Kantian sense? Does the will not contain an incoercible part that the formalism of universality could not oblige? And we might even wonder whether, Kant notwithstanding, that incoercible spontaneity, which bears witness both to the multiplicity of humans and the uniqueness of persons, is already pathology and sensibility and a 'bad will'.

Emmanuel Levinas, "The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other".

Emmanuel Levinas's writings present a critique of the digressive formalism and universalism of the concepts that mark the philosophical tradition's will to rationality. In a chapter of *Totality and Infinity*, the first of his two major philosophical critiques, entitled "Will and Reason", Levinas argues that the formal distinction of will on the one hand and understanding and reason on the other according to the Kantian tradition, constructs a limited concept of rationality as well as cognition. The limitations of the concepts come to the fore in the way they inform Edmund Husserl's phenomenology in its emphasis on acts of intentionality, as a rational will to objectivity or, in other words, the manifestation of objects for a subject according to its rational cognitive capacity. Insofar as a rather rigid constellation of rationality and cognition marks phenomenology's epistemological will, Levinas argues that the project misses a crucial dimension of lived subjectivity. Classical phenomenology, in line with much of philosophy's preoccupation with an epistemological project, premises its project on its capacity for a universal 'scientific' inclusiveness synonymous with its concepts' powers of generalisation. The

constellation, to the point of identification, of rationality and cognition, refers to a specific sense of 'the intelligible', the cornerstone of 'scientific' philosophy. Levinas criticises the exclusive emphasis on the intelligible in cognition and its references in philosophical knowledge. *Totality and Infinity* is subtitled "An essay on exteriority" and refers to the fact that, for Levinas, ethics describes a relation with another, not a conceptualisation nor experience of values, but "an access to exterior being" which is understood according to an orientation towards otherness in a corporeal sense inseparable from the meaning of the subjective I. Classical phenomenology and philosophy's emphasis on cognitive apprehension is subsuming and reductive of the other; the Other "exceeding the idea of the other in me" (TI 50) is irreducible to a concept of the other 'in the same', irreducible to otherness *comprehended* according to a cognitive thematisation or reflection. The problem Levinas takes up is that the reduction of what is other than thought, in its supposed presence to self, to a general concept, is forgetful of a crucial dimension of lived subjectivity. The reduction is forgetful of affective life, which must be thought in terms of the life of the subjective body, *sensibility*, and a genesis that pertains to this sensibility, in excess of the determinations of rational thought.

Imbued with particular significance in Levinas's philosophy, 'the face' of the Other (*le Visage d'Autrui*) expands upon the notion of the rational and intelligible¹. Levinas suggests that if the face be considered "the very upsurge of the rational, then the will is distinguished fundamentally from the intelligible, which it must not comprehend and into which it must not disappear, for the intelligibility of this intelligible resides precisely in ethical behavior, that is, in the responsibility to which it invites the will" (TI 194). This quotation sums up the charge of intellectualism that Levinas extends to Husserl via the Kantian relation of the will to understanding and reason. The will, for Levinas, is rooted

¹ The other presents himself to ethical subjectivity according to an *affective* relation. 'Exceeding the idea of the other in me', the other presents himself in a manner which Levinas says "we here name face" (TI 50). The point raised with respect to the philosophical tradition is that the Other affects in a manner which exceeds my thought or what I can know of him. Levinas describes an *infinity* of the other person as betraying the structure of a thought that 'thinks more than it thinks' or carries an excess within itself. See Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 54. In this sense, Levinas's notion of ethics ultimately refers thought to an anterior *sensibility* as ethical orientation toward an Other. The Other as face or *Autrui* is the central concept of a thought that emphasises the extent to which it is based in sensibility, a corporeal relation.

in a sensibility, wherein ethics is premised in a response or rather a responsiveness, which precedes reflection by understanding, or reason according to 'universal law'. The face is "intelligible", given sense, according to its own 'expressivity'. 'The face of the Other' signifies as itself, by itself, without the mediation of the categories of understanding and reason and beyond the Kantian categorical imperative. That is to say, ethical response/ibility does not originate with the philosophical I or self in reflection, but with the Other, or the other in the Other and the manner in which I am affected. 'The face' *makes sense* in the giving and receiving of signs that make up the relation in which one's subjectivity is oriented 'for the Other'. Levinas raises an objection to the simple *correlative* basis of the subject-object relation in the tradition that culminates in classical phenomenology's constitutive philosophy, and contends that the Other is irreducible to a *known object* for subjectivity. In fact, the subject-object relation that is worked with in the tradition betrays its dis-orientation in that it portends to a sort of transparency in the relation. The phenomenology of Husserl orients its ontology and epistemology from a premise of methodological transparency². Levinas responds to this by saying that he "neither believe[s] that there is transparency possible in method, nor that philosophy is possible as transparency"³.

In this work, I follow to a great degree the premises of Levinas's critique of Husserlian phenomenology. Levinas constructs an approach to the question of the Other and sensibility, according to a conception of the other in the Other. For Levinas, subjectivity emerges as a specific awareness or sensibility receptive to the approach of the Other; this awareness emerges from the orientation of a corporeal situation, and so reorients the Kantian 'imperative'. Levinas suggests that ethics is the concrete 'putting into question of my spontaneity' by the manner in which I am exposed to the Other (TI 43). The

² The particular correlative presumption regarding the known object in Husserl's schema of the *noesis-noema*, the act and object of the intentional analysis, is targeted by Levinas. I take up this point in chapter one. For Levinas, the reductions of conceptualization and cognition in the projects which mark the thought of much of the philosophical tradition, and which he calls *ontology*, refers to the bypassing of *Autrui* insofar as the other does not affect me according to these terms, is not reducible to an ontological relation I can judge according to noetic correlation. The 'affect' of the Other on or in me precedes my removal from the relation as spectator or my 'consciousness of'. The other is not given as an object for reflection.

³ Levinas quoted in Critchley and Bernasconi (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 6

relevance of Levinas with respect to the philosophical tradition is his development of the significance of the Other's 'entry' with regard to my subjectivity, as a singular affection with regard to my subjective awareness, and not as correlative to my intentions. Ethics, according to Levinas, operates outside an epistemology based in ontological correlation according to the presumed transparency of method, and in fact concerns the emergence of thought⁴ according to a prior affective orientation. If epistemology on the classical account is premised on an originary autonomy in reflective subjectivity, the methodological premise implicit here is based on a certain forgetfulness of the extent to which thought, as reflection, originates from sensibility. This is evident, not only in the Kantian separation of the faculties and the categories of the mind as what produces thought, but in the entire Cartesian tradition's bracketing of the embodied affections which necessarily inform thought. Husserlian phenomenology continues the tradition to the extent that Husserl never succeeds in presenting an adequate account of the body within the methodology. The significance of the body, or what I will term the life lived according to the 'subjective body' in concordance with Michel Henry's development of a 'material phenomenology', remains reduced in classical phenomenology. Michel Henry's notion of the subjective body, as propagated in his *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* (1975) makes sense of the orientation of Levinas's thought according to an understanding of affectivity premised on the orientation of the body in B/being.

My aim in this work is to demonstrate a specific alliance of shared premises in the French *phenomenological* reception and critique of Husserl's philosophy. I aim to show that the affiliations between Levinas's and Jacques Derrida's reading of Husserl foreground the question of genesis in phenomenology as the main problematic and show how (the question of) genesis in classical phenomenology is – according to Derrida and Henry *necessarily* – inadequately approached.

⁴ According to Levinas, the so called declaration of the end of metaphysics 'is premature'. In fact, "metaphysics – the *relation* with the being [*étant*] which is accomplished *as* ethics – precedes the understanding of Being and survives ontology". Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, cited in Critchley and Bernasconi, 2002, p. 10. What I want to show in this work is that this meta-physics comes out of a specific corporeal situation.

Derrida's reading of Husserl, as much as Levinas's, remains to a great extent phenomenological. Both present a critique within phenomenological parameters and presumptions, keeping close to the phenomenological discourse. Levinas as well as Derrida counter phenomenology with its missing dimension, what Derrida argues is an inadequacy in Husserl's notion of time-consciousness. Husserlian phenomenology fails to sufficiently account for the time of the body or 'sensibility' despite his acknowledgement of an internal division in the present of time-consciousness: Derrida shows, in *Speech and Phenomena*, that Husserl's account of time works against the isolation of the 'now' according to its own premises. Levinas and Derrida supplement phenomenology by introducing the notion of *trace*⁵. The trace of the other or the time of the Other, as premised in sensibility and the affective order of a time of the body, presents a challenge to the supposed adequacy and transparency of consciousness to itself, its presence-to-self. Arguing that self-presence is always already awareness of the presence of otherness, Levinas and Derrida operate with a notion of 'awareness' which originates in an embodied situation and a 'present' conditioned by a source of non-presence. In fact, the implicit premise in both is that self-awareness – and by extension thought and reflection – originates by a separation of what is self and other than self, which then always already informs or conditions self-awareness. The point of the argument here is that the trace or temporality of the other – diachrony on Levinas's account – disrupts the absolute self-presence of what Husserl designates as the purity or transparency of consciousness in reflection. Levinas and Derrida point out that the phenomenological project – as primarily an epistemological project and identified by a certain methodology – stumbles on one of its main methodological principles, an originary presence-to-self of a subjectivity identified as rational will to knowledge. I aim to demonstrate the extent to which Levinas's and Derrida's critiques of Husserlian phenomenology reorient the question of genesis outside the parameters of self-present consciousness and deconstruct phenomenological 'beginnings' premised on the absolute identity of self-presence and the doctrine of constitution. In this work I work through and with the critiques to the extent

⁵ The meaning of the notion appears originally in Levinas. Derrida adopts the notion and its meaning in Levinas, and refers specifically to Levinas in his essay "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978).

that they present arguments for an immanent genesis, that is, a genesis pertaining to an orientation or 'manifestation' of a corporeal situation. I take up specific aspects of Deleuze's as well as Henry's thought in so far as I consider them to support this argument regarding immanent genesis.

Chapter One undertakes the critique of Husserlian phenomenology on the basis of a Levinasian and Derridean reading. The first part works with an implicit Levinasian approach, and underwrites the paradoxes in which classical phenomenology is imbricated according to the methodological impasses. I take up this point according to Eugen Fink's 1933 *Kantstudien* essay, in which he reads the impasses in terms of the problem of genesis. The second part deals with the Derridean critique of Husserl. I show that Derrida takes up precisely the Finkian paradoxes in his essay "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" to argue that real genesis is ultimately closed off in Husserlian phenomenology by the structure dictated by its methodological impasse. I proceed to develop the argument of immanent genesis according to Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*, which demonstrates that because Husserl's methodology determines its epistemology and premises ontological possibility, genesis of meaning outside supposed self-present consciousness necessarily eludes it.

Derrida's argument proceeds via the critique of the notions of 'expression' and 'indication' as developed in the first of the phenomenological studies of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. Derrida's account of the role of the trace, primarily, and the movement of 'différance', demonstrates the omissions – or rather elisions – in the Husserlian account of the origin of signification. Husserl fails to account for signification and language in a broad sense. Derrida shows that Husserl's attempt to isolate a pure self-present expression must necessarily lead to an aporia: subjectivity is not at any point enclosed in the present-now of transcendental consciousness; language cannot be conceived as pure expression according to a reduced meaning sphere where empirical sensibility or bodily being is bracketed off *according to* an ideal realm of meaning content. Derrida's argument operates within the recognition that language works according to a complex of signifiers and significations, which eludes the purity of

transcendental self-presence and precedes concepts of self and meaning: there is no absolute objective meaning or identity of presentation that can be isolated as pure *eidos* or form in the conscious act. 'Expression' cannot be isolated from 'indication' according to the Husserlian account: any presentation in language is already a re-presentation. Language works according to the fact that reality is that which is always already scripted or inscribed with significance. Signification and sense works in language as representation of 'difference' or 'alterity', in other words as repetition of a non-presence or an-other presence which is not containable in the form(ation) of the Husserlian presence to consciousness. I argue that the development of classical phenomenology represented by these four writers have this in common: they recognise that thought originates in a signification inseparable from sensibility or the life of the subjective body.

Chapter Two takes up Merleau-Ponty's departure from classical phenomenology in his late unfinished work, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1967). Like Levinas and Derrida, he contests the Husserlian account of origins referred to acts of representational intentionality, 'found' in a transcendental ego-consciousness. I present Merleau-Ponty's late work insofar as it provides a valuable corrective in its critique of the Husserlian reduction of genesis to what is visible to a subject in its absolute presence to self. The notions of Visible and Invisible as developed in Merleau-Ponty underscore an important argument regarding the possibility of immanent genesis; genesis is in excess of what is visible to the intuitions of consciousness. Merleau-Ponty effectively critiques classical phenomenology's dependence on the metaphor of vision, and the tradition's identification of vision and knowledge according to what *is*, presented to an internally stable self. The notion of the 'in-visible' points to that which necessarily, according to phenomenological premises, eludes the grasp of a consciousness which holds or commands its object by its gaze, and so questions the traditional primacy of the 'spectacle' available to theoretical thought. Derrida takes up this argument of Merleau-Ponty in his *Memoirs of the Blind*, in which he works to some extent with the same premises regarding the in-visible as Merleau-Ponty. The insight in both is that genesis is always already anterior to the determinations of 'spectacular' consciousness, and is in this sense 'immanent', conditioned or 'contaminated' by the affective orders inseparable

from the specific awareness bound up with the life of the subjective body. Merleau-Ponty's analyses contain an important emphasis on the body, as *Leib* rather than *Körper* as he develops Husserl's own analyses in this direction. However, body and genesis in Merleau-Ponty is ultimately premised on a problematic notion of continuity in which genesis is understood in terms of the all-encompassing *flesh* of being.

Chapter Three discusses the work of Michel Henry and Gilles Deleuze in the capacity that they account for an adequate notion of immanent genesis, which underwrites the impasses of classical phenomenology. Henry's work provides an invaluable contribution to the critique of classical phenomenology in his development of a 'material phenomenology'. Despite what is in many ways a problematic account of the nature of *self-manifestation*, his argument that there are elisions regarding the materiality of a genesis other than *from* the viewpoint of transcendental phenomenology, convincingly illustrates the limitation of classical phenomenology's 'ontological monism', or the reduction of 'manifestation' to a manifestation for transcendental consciousness, that is, to act-intentionality and object-manifestation. Deleuze's notion of 'immanence', a 'life', which eludes representational knowledge according to Cartesian and Kantian premises taken up by classical phenomenological representation, echoes Henry's insight that a specific life of 'the subjective body' – sensibility – eludes the subject-object relations of classical phenomenology. Henry's argument is that the question of genesis must take account of more than one type of phenomenality or manifestation, and places its premise with the 'life of the subjective body'. That is, this body informs subjectivity as a singular situation, 'original transcendental content' or 'Life', irreducible to manifestation on the classical model. Deleuze's entire philosophy seems to argue for a specific notion of immanent genesis, a 'non-organic life that burns us', and theorises events of creation according to a prevalent notion of energetic materiality, a certain sensibility that pertains to a subjectivity which is 'multiplicitous' insofar as it originates with an orientation of the body. Deleuze, as well as Henry, points to a 'life' irreducible to the 'world' as it appears to consciousness or the theoretical spectator. The reorientation by immanent genesis affiliates with the critiques of Levinas and Derrida. Levinas's take on phenomenological methodology describes the phenomenological reduction to intentional consciousness as

'an act in which we consider life in all its concreteness' but not as it is *lived*, that is, according to a time conditioned by the corporeal exposure to an other⁶.

Chapter Four presents in the first part Levinas's philosophy of the face and his argument for an ethics with regard to the politics of a thought that cannot preserve otherness in its epistemological relations. The philosophy of the face is based in an orientation toward a corporeal situation, which always already exposes to otherness as the non-permanence of the face's form and meaning. I emphasise at this point the distinctive Levinasian development of non-intentional affectivity, as it pertains in Levinas to the vulnerability of the situation of being one-for-the-Other and the question put to the classical will to rationality and universality. Ultimately, the relevance of Levinas's contention regarding the face and a signification or sense that are not referable to the representations of subjectivity, is that it speaks of a 'life', or a separation of immanent genesis from the determinations of egoic consciousness, pertaining to the singular, subjective body. Classical phenomenology builds its methodology on a reductive view of the body. The second part discusses Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind*, the commentary accompanying a collection of artworks he curated at the Louvre Museum in Paris. In this work, Derrida takes up the problematic surrounding the metaphor of vision and its privileged status with regard to knowledge. This work is the first and only in which Derrida explicitly comments on Merleau-Ponty's work, and the work in question is *The Visible and the Invisible*. In agreement with this aspect of Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy, Derrida addresses the notion of an in-visible life of the visible, 'right on' the visible, as he says. The point he recognises in Merleau-Ponty is that genesis is not referable to an originary consciousness but must be traced according to phenomena whose in-appearance are of another kind. Genesis extends out-with the parameters of

⁶ Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Philosophy*, cited in Crithley and Bernasconi, 2002, p. 9. In his Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, Simon Crithley juxtaposes Levinas's 'defense of subjectivity' with 'anti-humanists' like (Foucault) and Deleuze. Part of my point in bringing in a discussion of Deleuze in support of the question of an immanent genesis is to show that, like in Levinas, the notion of subjectivity in Deleuze is underwritten by a certain 'physics' concerning the life of the subjective body. I do not see the relevance of the labeling 'anti-humanist'. Although Deleuze describes subjectivity as multiplicitous, the emphasis is on the singularity of a certain life of the subjective body, which gives rise to subjectivity and approaches Levinas's notion of 'the other within the same'. See Crithley and Bernasconi, 2002, pp. 19-20.

conscious determination and phenomenology's 'evidential insight', and does not conform geometrically or logically to the correlations intuited by the conscious gaze. Not only that, but genesis outwits epistemological vision. Derrida's commentary on the exhibition of blind men and visionaries concludes that immanent genesis, as a specific blind point of view, in-forms epistemological vision as a specific life of the singular body, as its separation from consciousness.

Chapter Five engages with the art of Henri Michaux. My argument in this respect is that the specific developments on the impasses of classical phenomenology by the above writers provide a crucial perspective, the notion of immanent genesis, for understanding Michaux's work. His work also throws light on the specific sense in which 'immanent genesis' expresses itself as art. In taking up Derrida's argument regarding the point of view, I show how Michaux's manner of positioning himself with regard to his art demonstrates the bodily reality of the 'blind point'. Levinas's descriptions of 'the other within the same' and a passivity with regard to the other which takes place 'on the surface of the skin, at the edge of the nerves', demonstrate the manner of exposed sensibility according to which Michaux's creative experiments are marked⁷. At times heightened by use of the hallucinogen mescaline, Michaux's visual works in particular explore and express the temporality of the body in its vulnerability and affectation. His work puts into question the presumption of self-presence in the transparent 'now'. The insight expressed as art in Michaux is that the theoretical spectator is always already informed by an orientation, which pertains to the subjective body, subjected to the other within the same or the invisible 'right on' the visible. It is imperative in order to understand Michaux's work that one turns to the critique of the presumptions of the tradition of thought that culminate in Husserlian phenomenology and the exposure of its aporias, the forgetfulness of a signification which exceeds intelligibility and questions self-presence.

⁷ Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, quoted in Critchley and Bernasconi, 2002, p. 21.

The argument of Michel Henry's thesis regarding material phenomenology and 'pathos and language' points to that missing dimension in classical phenomenology which in different ways is taken up by Deleuze, Derrida, Michaux and especially Levinas. For Levinas, ethics is lived in the relation to an other grounded in an orientation of the life of the subjective body and language in a broad sense. This work aims to account for the manner in which in various ways, these writers take up the question of 'immanent genesis' and meet over this question. The question of immanent genesis taken up in these various ways poses a significant critique of the forgetfulness performed by classical phenomenology at the cost of considering 'what a body can do' for our understanding of the singularity of subjectivity. How does subjectivity signify as singularity and what does this mean? What is really involved in the notion of the subjective body? This work aims to show how these questions can be reduced to the question of immanent genesis, and that the question of immanent genesis is a significant challenge to phenomenological representation. The orientation of this tradition of phenomenological thought represents a specific take on cognitive discourse as a phenomenological reception of Husserl.

Chapter One

Phenomenological Beginnings

Phenomenology, inaugurated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) at the outset of the twentieth century, was introduced as a 'radicalisation of philosophy'. A specific manner of doing philosophy, emphasised as 'practice' rather than a prefigured system, it was formally introduced with Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901). The work stated a need for an encompassing 'objective theory' of knowledge, "the pure phenomenology of the experiences of thinking and knowing"¹. With the Second Edition of 1913 it is clear that the project concerns an exploration of transcendental subjectivity or 'pure consciousness' by a transcendental science, phenomenology. Husserl states as the 'exclusive concern' of this science of phenomenology:

[...] experiences intuitively seizable and analysable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts... This phenomenology must bring to pure expression, must *describe* in terms of their essential concepts and their governing formulae of essence, the essences which directly make themselves known in intuition, and the connections which have their roots purely in such essences. Each such statement of essence is an *a priori* statement [...]².

Phenomenology, as conceived in Husserl's project as well as all subsequent variations of phenomenology, assumed a radical fidelity to experience. However, a concomitant assumption of access to evidential insights of essential idealities is more problematical with respect to a comprehensive account of cognition. As the quotation from the *Logical*

¹ Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N Findlay (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), Vol. 1, p. 249.

² Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, p. 249.

Investigations states, the fidelity to experience is in Husserl's project inextricable from the aim of getting 'to the things themselves' through experience. That is, the things themselves presumed to be '*intuitively seizable and analysable* in the pure *generality* of their *essence*'. This more problematic aim remained the focus of Husserl's phenomenological research. The premises for this aim are what a specific phenomenological reception of Husserl – Derrida and Levinas particularly – come to question. I agree to a great extent with their reading of Husserlian phenomenology and the identification of the aporias that inform phenomenological determinations. Husserlian – or classical – phenomenology operates with a reductive account of language and signification which leads to the specific impasses which result from its determinations. Ultimately, the problem of classical phenomenology is a problem of genesis consequent of an inadequate account of signification.

Classical philosophy – since ancient Greece – took up *phenomena* as a starting point of investigation and, like modern phenomenology, attempted to know their "*archai*" or founding possibility. In classical philosophy or the metaphysical tradition, the search for ultimate principles or essences led to the positing of an absolute ground – God. According to Husserlian phenomenology the positing of God as the ground of the appearance of phenomena does not answer the question of the ground of the Being – or meaning – of being. God – as an absolute being and ground or creator of other beings bypasses the more primordial question of the constitution of being's Being. The question of *Being or the meaning of being* goes beyond the causal question of being and the grounding of finite beings to a concern with *how* the Being of world and beings are to be *determined* and *constituted* as Eugen Fink points out in his 1933 *Kantstudien* essay³. Phenomenology is concerned with how Being is determined and constituted in and through transcendental subjectivity. The question is how to *theorise* or 'know' the meaning of Being. That is, the focus of phenomenological research becomes a transcendental subjectivity that poses the question of being; phenomenology bypasses the otherworldly creator for a subjectivity that founds its Being by constituting it. The idea of

³ I will return to this essay.

constitution is Husserl's response to the question of the possibility of experience. The idea of constitution in Husserl is complex and problematic and ultimately leads to unsustainable determinations in its account of the genesis of meaning. Classical phenomenology ultimately contends that Being cannot be without subjectivity, while nevertheless this subjectivity cannot *be* apart from the world or being which it thus in a double sense constitutes. In line with the general trend of twentieth-century thought, the focus is subjectivity. However, for classical phenomenology, the study of phenomena becomes the study of a specific form or view of consciousness in the constitution of its experience and this specific reduction of 'experience' leads to the aporias in phenomenology's grounding of its theoretical assumptions.

Positively, the Husserlian exploration of *the field* of consciousness saw the phenomenological project as a 'set of infinite tasks' of philosophy. Positively also, subjectivity was in focus seemingly as an open-ended source of sense and meaning. Phenomenology, as a *descriptive* philosophy rather than a philosophy of causal explanation, was to describe things in their *appearance to* consciousness. That is, phenomenological elucidation concerned the *manner* of appearance of things and events to a consciousness in *direct engagement* with them. Accordingly, there is evident a certain aesthetic aspect to phenomenological philosophy. Experiencing consciousness, and thus the life of experiencing transcendental subjectivity, becomes the access for a descriptive 'science of appearance'⁴. In order to get at the *phenomena* the science of phenomenology would claim to access the phenomena from within, so to speak. Thus follows the presumption of evidential insights of intuition in consciousness and a correlation of consciousness and ideality⁵; the ideal object conforms to an intended

⁴ The phenomenology of the early Husserl has its origins in the work of Franz Brentano, from whom he also took the term 'phenomenology' – although the term had also been used by Kant and Hegel. Husserl's project was inspired by Brentano's search for an a priori science concerning 'laws' of mental life, the description of the given with respect to a Cartesian assumption of the self-evidence of 'inner perception'. Husserl's project was the inspiration to extend this descriptive psychology – understood by Brentano as a science identifying universal laws on the basis of the individual empirical instance – to a general descriptive science of consciousness. Ultimately he envisaged this 'philosophy as descriptive science' to provide conceptual foundation for 'scientific' knowledge of all kinds. See Dermot Moran, ed. *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000). Most of my exposition so far is based on Moran's *Introduction*.

meaning in and through a rational activity of consciousness. The Husserlian life-world⁶ is determined by the experience of the world by human subjectivity: the 'relation' postulates a pre-theoretical life-world as the 'source' for the meaning determinations of this subjectivity which then is the ultimate source of the Being of this world and being. The meaning of being is established by a 'performance' or act of *intentional* subjectivity. Subjectivity is theorised as a meaning-intending structure and meaning is reduced to meaning-for-consciousness. The problem, as I see it, lies with the idea of an almost exclusive determination of the source of meaning through the rational capacity of cognition or theoretical consciousness in a presumed absolute presence of self⁷.

The ultimate Being or meaning of being is understood in terms of an achievement of transcendental/intentional consciousness as an exclusively rational self-present structure. Thus Being-in or – according to – consciousness is supposed as the constitution of what *is*. That the Being of the world is not denied transcendence does not change the fact that conscious life is what constitutes the transcendent as inseparable from what we must consider then as a kind of absolute theoretical consciousness as the ultimate – not just explanatory but constituting – source of reality, 'the world' for consciousness. Husserl has on occasion described his philosophy as a transcendental idealism. As Levinas and Derrida both point out it seems that Being for Husserl is being object, and that objectivity is (to be) known or theorised as objectivity according to a specific presumption of subjective rationality only⁸. The relation between subjectivity and object is a cognitive over ontological relation and I will show, in the following, that such estimation must exclude important aspects of subjective being. Subjectivity, in classical phenomenology, is seen as *essentially* epistemological in nature, and the phenomenological project as essentially an epistemological one. The task of phenomenology, as a clarification of the

⁵ The word phenomenon, from the Greek *phainomenon*, comes in Husserlian phenomenology to carry significance insofar as its essence is available to conscious intuition.

⁶ The notion of the life-world in Husserl becomes more prominent in his later analyses.

⁷ My estimation is here obviously in accordance with a Levinasian reading of Husserl as well as Derrida's critique of Husserlian self-presence, which I shall return to in the last part of this chapter.

⁸ See Emmanuel Levinas critique of Husserl in *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Andre Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

meaning and Being of being, becomes the clarification of the essential structures of cognising subjectivity based in assumptions of logic and rational capacity. The focus on subjectivity marks the phenomenological project to the extent that the cognising capacity of transcendental subjectivity is the epistemological and ontological starting point. This work argues that the extent to which this cognising subjectivity is theorised in terms of a presumption of exclusive notions of rationality and logic, classical phenomenology propounds a view of cognition which necessarily reduces any understanding of the significance of *embodiment* and any notion of sensible being to the point where it presents a reductive view of cognition. Husserl's phenomenological project is defined in terms of methodological reductions, which precisely support a reductive view of cognition, as they cannot sufficiently account for the effects of the body and embodiment as *vital* structures of cognition.

I. The reductions of phenomenology: cognition before sensibility

Phenomenology's radical reflection upon transcendental subjectivity is the central methodological presumption and possibility of ontological determination. Transcendental reflection, as the methodological point of orientation, is based on a presumption of determination of transcendent objects by an act of an immanent 'pure consciousness'. This 'pure consciousness' is responsible for the main paradoxes of classical phenomenology and provokes the varied responses to phenomenological insight that I discuss in the next chapters. Let us establish that the methodology furthermore assumes that the access of phenomenology as 'scientific' approach to the object *in its essence* – as *grasped* by a subjectivity – required specific (re)moves with respect to our attitudes to the world of objects as well as towards our psychological acts. Specifically, this involved a practice of *reductions* of what Husserl termed the 'natural attitude' of everyday assumption and viewpoint, regarding the construction of knowledge. This viewpoint, always already there with its culturally marked significances and socially informed

approaches to the determination of the world involved, according to Husserlian phenomenology, the positing of a world blurred in its reality or truth by such common sense transmissions. Accordingly, Husserl argued that real phenomenological insight could only come about after the performance of various types of 'bracketing' or reduction of the 'natural attitude' that enabled a retreat from this already 'contaminated' world to a domain of ideal determinations according to pure transcendental subjectivity. The purpose of establishing this particular mode of presumed 'access' to phenomena was to uncover what was presumed to be an essential structure of cognitive *acts*.

As I have pointed out, according to the aims of phenomenological research the subjectivity uncovered in terms of the structure of cognitive acts is conceived as epistemological in orientation; it is conceived as a meaning-intending structure, and theorised mainly in terms of a project of rational consciousness. In Husserlian phenomenology, consciousness grasps the world of objects according to what he terms in *Ideas I* a 'noetic – noematic structure'. Husserlian *noesis* refers to an intentional act of consciousness; the *noema* is the object as intentionally grasped by consciousness⁹. That is, this structure is held to determine the ideal object, as it appears to consciousness in intuitive evidence. What *is* is in its presentation to consciousness. 'Before' – and as I see it, this 'before' represents the key to the misconception – the ontological question of existence, phenomenological elucidation involves a consideration of the meaning-correlates of the intentional act; that is, before a determination of the existence of an object there is a determination of a meaning correlate in the manner of an appearance of the object for consciousness, or specifically the conscious act¹⁰. The 'objective' world is always already there; the aim of constitutive phenomenology is bound up with the

⁹ See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 96, 233. The full title of this work is *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*. Trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht; Kluwer, 1983).

¹⁰ Husserl develops the notion of the intentional structure of consciousness from Brentano's retrieval of the scholastic conception. Attempting to get at an essential nature of psychic acts, Brentano adopts the conception of the object's intentional inexistence. Refer to Franz Brentano, *Descriptive Psychology*, trans. B. Müller (London: Routledge, 1995). Husserl develops the thesis – shed of the metaphysical implications of Brentano's/ the Scholastics' conception – that all conscious experience (*Erlebnis*) is 'about something'. Consciousness is always consciousness *of*. These comments are informed by my reading of Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000).

assumption that the objective world can be 'proved' or grasped in evidence through the identification of and by its 'presence' to rational subjectivity. In essence, 'the objective' in classical phenomenology seems to involve not only the idea of objectivity for subjectivity, but also an objective for subjectivity. In this sense, phenomenology aims at a 're-construction' of the world according to a *generality* of essences. Phenomenology aims at a possible harmonious and universal *conception* through an ideal *abstraction*, set against the uncertainty presented by the contingency, modification and change that inform material existence. It is precisely the latter aspect of sensible or material being with which I am concerned. Classical phenomenology brackets off a sensible which, as I argue, in fact exceeds the intelligible and the structures of rational cognition or 'intuition'. Phenomenology on the Husserlian model thus performs an impasse, a proposition and an abstraction that are unsustainable.

The development of phenomenology after Husserl shows a tension with respect to the consideration that Husserlian phenomenology and its particular configuration of the status and role of consciousness seemed to involve a return to a neo-Kantian idealism. The latter was, as pointed out in Eugen Fink's essay, precisely the adversary prompting the phenomenological impetus in philosophy¹¹. Husserl considered phenomenology to move beyond the impasse of traditional philosophy regarding skepticism and the existence of the external world. The philosophical issue according to phenomenology moves beyond the question of premises for belief in the world¹² in addressing reasons for skepticism as opposed to belief. The phenomenological response was formed in terms of the various reductions. If defined in terms of its object – phenomena – phenomenology concerns the establishment of grounds for the possibility of appearance or manifestation of phenomena. For Husserl, this involves a focus on the nature of consciousness in its actual experiencing, that is, beyond its delineations by common sense or philosophical

¹¹ See Eugen Fink, 'The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism', in Richard O. Elveton, trans. and ed., *The Philosophy of Husserl* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970). Hereafter referred to as PPH. Fink's motive in this essay is precisely to point out the difference and specificity of phenomenology against the developments in critical philosophy.

¹² The belief in the world was considered precisely the determining feature of the 'natural attitude', which 'clouded' the 'real issues' thought to be the *essentials*.

tradition. Thus, the mode of philosophy concerned with getting to the essences of things goes through the negative procedure of bracketing all traditional insight of epistemological abstraction and ideation, which in fact involved all of rationalistic and idealistic theory¹³.

Phenomenology must reject the traditional representationalist approach to knowledge, the Lockean Idea of representation/copy of what is outside the mind. According to Husserl's phenomenology, experience involves a *performance* by transcendental subjectivity:

[Experience] is not a mere taking of something alien to consciousness into consciousness...Experience is the performance in which for me, the experiencer, experienced being "is there", and is there *as what* it is, with the whole content and the mode of being that experience itself, by the performance going on in its intentionality, attributes to it¹⁴.

In other words, classical phenomenology, as developed by Husserl, bases its view of knowledge as irreducibly bound up with the structure of intentional subjectivity. The doctrine of intentionality, as the constitution of the ideal object or the 'world' by the intentional structure of consciousness, relies on the problematic premise of givenness of insights as intuitive self-evidence. When Husserl calls for a science of knowledge that will take philosophical enquiry 'back to the things themselves'¹⁵, this means back to the things as they appear to consciousness, or to *intuition*, but rational intuition. Phenomenology, or the *logos* of the phenomenon or world discovered through measures of reduction (PPH 130), finds its motivation in, on the one hand, the formalism of ideal objects and, on the other, the radicality of subjective intuition. The dependence for philosophy on the insights of intuition refers, with respect to Husserl, to a specific intellectual approach, considered to yield a higher form of knowledge of ideal essentials

¹³ See Moran, ed., 2000.

¹⁴ Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969) 233- 234. Quoted in Moran, ed., 2000.

¹⁵ Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, p. 252.

on a par with mathematics and geometry. The importance placed on intuition for the formation of 'an uncontaminated' knowledge of the things themselves, is part of a wider critique of philosophical 'common sense' and the attempt to establish philosophical interrogation as 'scientific'. The primacy of intuition figures in Husserl's work from the earlier to the later, and the concept of *originary presentive intuition* – the 'originary giving' to consciousness – comes to be his 'principle of all principles':

[...] every originary *presentive* intuition is a *legitimising* source of cognition, [...] everything originarily (so to speak in its "personal" actuality) offered to us in "intuition" is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being [...] ¹⁶

Intuition (of) and givenness (to) are thus the two central terms informing the classical phenomenological approach to the relation of cognition and subjectivity. The quotation from Husserl's *Ideas I* states that the knowing act and the known object are considered in terms of a correlative constitution by way of the 'apodictic evidence' of rational intuition or reason. Different modes of givenness of phenomena are irreducibly determined as different forms of intuition in the formation of knowledge. Givenness sums up the idea of a dative of experience and, importantly, the supposition of a self-present consciousness. Positively, phenomenology instates the transcendence of subjectivity through the dictum that experience is always experience to someone. A *manner* of experiencing the world becomes the statement of that world as knowledge of the real, but fails to incorporate the full significance of that reality.

That is to say that a problem lies with the idea of a constitutive transcendental subjectivity and the 'appearance' of inevitable paradoxes with regard to the ontological relation of subjectivity and its material involvement in the world. The phenomenology calls for a complexity of relation between transcendental subjectivity, psychological ego and material being. The view that the objects of knowledge are correlative to an intuitive seeing of pure consciousness implies, as I see it, a rationality that cannot as such

¹⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 1, p. 44.

adequately account for the relation. In this area of constitutive phenomenology I believe Husserl insufficiently theorises the material manifestations of bodily being with respect to cognition¹⁷. As for the theoretical moves made to investigate the actual processes of the engagement of consciousness with the world, the reduction of the so-called natural attitude marks Husserlian phenomenology as a move towards the neo-Kantian and Cartesian positions as the transcendental ego becomes the formal structure in the constitution of relations of knowledge (independent of existential assumptions). At the same time, although 'reduced' consciousness is seen as more than a part of the world, the phenomenology of consciousness becomes that of a consciousness or subjectivity *of* the world. As Eugen Fink pointed out, it 'contains the world' (PPH 100). The negative procedure of the reduction gives access to a pure consciousness by which is explained the epistemological as the move from the sensible to the ideal, but the movement does not consider any effect of the sensible; the sensible is bracketed in the noesis. The 'affirmative' aspect of this mode of philosophy is the 're-construction' of the ontological, where the noesis as *now* the ultimate starting-point is theorised in terms of a potentiality for actualisation – or creation – of the ideal *and* in this sense, the sensible 'world'.

To the extent that the real focus of Husserlian phenomenology rests in the rigidity of this structure regarding theoretical idealities related by way of a supposed 'intuition' of self-present consciousness, we are presented with the following limited view of the nature of cognition: consciousness intends or constitutes the object in the absolute presence to self afforded by the act. To the extent that act-intentionality and the manifestation of objects for consciousness take prime of place in the make up of cognition, classical phenomenology limits cognition to an intentional and rational project of consciousness. The problem of this reductive view of cognition as I see it, is a consequence of the idea that phenomenology as a science is necessitated as coming before and determining its ontology. The noesis – of epistemological regression – becomes the ontological guarantor: phenomenology instates in this manner the epistemological approach as basis for the ontological result. Phenomenology as first philosophy in this sense defines itself

¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty's development of phenomenology of course deals with precisely the issue of the body and material being. I shall discuss his viewpoint in more detail in chapter two.

in terms of its method, and becomes a sort of non-ontology to the extent that it methodologically removes itself from determinations of 'ontic' relations, from existence. Husserlian phenomenology arrives at this rigid demarcation of the nature of consciousness and cognition through a specific negation. Husserl's phenomenology comes to the fore as an attempt to avoid 'naturalism', or a psychology of consciousness, in which consciousness in effect would be dealt with as no more than some *part of the world*¹⁸. The presupposition of cognition as essentially epistemological in nature involves the postulation of consciousness as a type of absolute and – as Derrida points out – self-present existence¹⁹. Cognitive experience [*Erlebnis*] would in accordance with the phenomenological project necessarily be theorised as more than a factual occurrence of nature. In summation, the idea is that the essence of some thing is available to a consciousness removed from existence or 'nature': the measures of reduction aim to 'remove' existence – or the sensible world – in order to access the essential structures of an *experience of a certain priority* and allow manifestation of intentional content as some evidential essentiality. The methodological *époché* postulates a move from knowledge to existence, from epistemology to ontology and this is based on the premise of the accessibility of a 'phenomenological residuum', an absolute potential of rational subjectivity. The 'pure consciousness' or noesis becomes the rational premise, the ultimate point of orientation through which can be accessed evidential 'reality', thus an ultimate origin of the epistemological and ontological. Husserl suggests in *Ideas I* that with respect to the real world 'pure consciousness' is some pure potency of a constructive or creative capacity before a process of actualisation²⁰. In other words, what he claims is that thought is a creative potential of subjectivity.

¹⁸ See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).

¹⁹ See Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1978). I shall return to this work in the last part of this chapter.

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze operates with a notion of virtuality and a specific relationship between the virtual and the actual, which takes up this idea of a creative or constructive capacity of thought. However, for Deleuze the creative and constructive capacity of a thought is not referable to a transcendental mind or constitutive consciousness. The world is not there in order then to be represented by transcendental subjective acts on the world. The 'world' is understood by Deleuze as what is effected or actualized in a movement of *life* which is no more than an 'actual-virtual interaction of imaging', according to which 'each flow of life becomes other in response to what it is not'. What *is* or becomes is this process of experiencing or imaging. See Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 87-88. Deleuze states in *Negotiations*:

We direct our glance of apprehension and theoretical inquiry to pure consciousness *in its own absolute Being*. It is this which remains over as the “phenomenological residuum” we were in quest of. [...] We have literally lost nothing, but we have won the whole of Absolute Being, which properly conceals in itself all transcendences. (*Ideas I*, § 50)

The problem regarding this claim to creative capacity lies with the premise of a prior bracketing of both sensible and ideal realities. This work argues that these necessarily always already make up an irruptive (with respect to the schema presented by classical phenomenology) force involved in any cognitive capacity. Husserl’s phenomenology cannot be said to recognise such forces:

Consciousness, considered in its “purity”, must be reckoned as a self-contained system of Being, as a system of Absolute Being, *into which nothing can penetrate* [...] (*Ideas I*, § 49, my emphasis).

When Husserl proposes a type of bracketing which in fact involves a postulation of an essential or ‘eidetic’ seeing (*Ideas I*, § 3, 8) as the basis of an epistemological possibility, he does so on the presumption of an in principle possibility of separation of essence and existence. What is contended with the notion of eidetic seeing is the accessibility of a transcendental ‘regarding’ of essences, where regarding means grasping – of essence by essence. The *eidetic reduction*, on the model of mathematics, involves a removal from actual existence not only insofar as it claims to grasp not a datum or fact but its essence as such; it also involves a remove from existence that must leave the continuity of

“There are images, things are themselves images, because images aren’t in our brain. The brain’s just one image among others. Images are constantly acting and reacting on each other, producing and consuming. There’s no difference at all between *images*, *things*, and motion”. Deleuze, quoted in Colebrook, 2002, p. 88. For Deleuze, experience is transcendental; judgment or perception cannot be considered in any way separate from a *sensibility* immersed in this dynamic of life, which in Deleuze is understood in terms of a notion of energetic materiality. This ‘physics’ in which thought is always already involved refers to a transcendental principle of experience, and this is the meaning of Deleuze’s ‘transcendental empiricism’. Genetically, historically and affectively life is the creations that ‘traverse us’, differences within univocity (96). The virtual represents the excess of this life in its potential for expression and creation, and of sensibility, with regard to human cognition, and is as real as the actual.

signification involved in bodily existence unaccounted. The eidetic science of phenomenology thus claims to undertake a move from the factual to something more originary: it sees itself as a 'science of origins' (*Ideas I*, § 56, 131). To the extent that this involves an investigation into how (ideal) meanings are constituted for consciousness, my claim is that it misses a mark. Not because there are no ideal meanings, but because there is, as I claim in this work, a dynamic material dimension of priority. There is always already a prior signification rooted in sensible being, which is an irreducible part of cognition. What I mean to show in the following, through developments in phenomenology as represented by Michel Henry and his development of a 'material phenomenology' particularly, is the extent to which a sensible which exceeds the intelligible comes into play and puts in question the phenomenological model of cognition. Whereas the subjectivity of classical phenomenology is thought in terms of 'giving sense', what is not taken into account is the manner in which 'sense', both ideal and sensible, always informs subjectivity. It is this dimension of embodied subjectivity that classical phenomenology does not really account for. As a consequence of its concern being primarily with rational experience, the description of meaning-formation concerns cognition (*Erkenntnis*) to the extent that this term means experiences in which something is grasped as 'known'. The 'creation' and construction involved in Husserlian cognition can therefore not involve any production of the truly new. As I see it, this is a consequence of a disregard for the full sense of cognition as involved in physical existence, a sensible that exceeds the rationally intelligible, and a concomitant reductive view of signification. As Jaques Derrida has pointed out²¹, and Husserl admitted, the issue of signification was never probed to a sufficient extent in Husserlian phenomenology. Husserl seems to miss the full extent and effect of an originary signification, which I argue points to a specific sense of embodied being. I shall develop my argument of the significance of a sensible of bodily or embodied being, and to this end discuss the work of Michel Henry in terms of his move from classical to a material phenomenology. The present work rejects the idea of a 're-turn' to the world of sensible

²¹ See Jacques Derrida, "Genesis and Structure and Phenomenology", in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1997). See also the Introduction to *Speech and Phenomena*, and in the text, p. 100 especially.

being, as a premise for cognition, and the exclusive basis of this move or argument in rational consciousness as the ultimate form of intentionality. Classical phenomenology grounds its argument regarding cognising subjectivity on an exclusive structure, in both senses of the word, and fails to account for the specific orientations of *sensibility*, which precede cognition. The structure is determined as reason, which closes off the genesis²² of the sensible and the materiality of signification.

To sum up, phenomenology is based on a presumption of something seen as more originary than the world of empirical fact; it grounds a 'science' and a logic upon which 'factual sciences' are dependent (*Ideas I*, § 8, 18) and concerns a sphere of pure possibility, a virtual realm of universal law or essence accessible to conceptual and linguistic determination through seeing/reduction, or in other words: transcendental reflection. Described as a correlate of a complex act of consciousness (*Ideas I*, § 23), the notion of seeing essences is problematic. The idea of seeing the universal in the individual and this emphasis on essences reflects Platonic thought, and the impasses of generality and abstraction, even though Husserl's phenomenology claims to move in a sphere irreducible to either traditional idealism or empiricism. While removed, as intentional content, from actuality and 'contingency' or factuality, essences are not generated, but grasped as correlates of consciousness. That is, as in the eidetic science of geometry, essential features of a phenomenon – an object manifest to consciousness – are claimed to be accessible as such for our understanding even if (the question of) actual existence is bracketed off:

[...]we speak of such absolute data; even if these data are related to objective actuality via their intentions, their intrinsic character is *within* them; nothing is

²² This is precisely Derrida's argument in "Genesis and Structure". Derrida points out that, for Husserl, a structure becomes the limitation of a 'wild genesis': Husserl refuses the possibility of an 'anarchy of' the noema. The limitation is 'the transcendental-eidetic limitation' which ensures the rigor of a rational movement of meaning. In Derrida's terms, it is the "irruption of the *logos*, the accession to human consciousness of the idea of an infinite task of reason". In *Writing and Difference*, p. 165. Derrida makes a similar point in his *Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry*, trans. J. P. Leavey (New York: Nicolas Hays Ltd., 1978). I shall return to this work.

assumed concerning the existence or non-existence of actuality²³.

The notion of grasping a pure phenomenon or an essence means grasping a *noemata* or correlate of consciousness, a meaning-structure: Paradoxically what follows from the intentional structure is a postulation of actual transcendence of what is grasped in the immanence of intuitive consciousness, as transcendent or ideal meaning.

The methodological reduction is a return from phenomena to the structures of cognition in order to re-turn to the world with an essential in-sight. Classical phenomenology argues that essence is *in principle separated* from existence; transcendental consciousness is a consciousness in principle removed from the world. Following Eugen Fink's interpretation on this point, as he defines the particular sense of the transcendental in Husserl's phenomenology²⁴, there still remains the problem of what the essence of subjectivity can be, and the problem of its exclusive determinations of the world, again in both senses of the word, constitution of essence by essence, or the thematisation of being. Fink specifies phenomenology's transcendental subjectivity as transcendent but *also immanent* to the world. Transcendental subjectivity is immanent to the world to the extent that it 'contains' the world within itself: intentionality so conceived produces, according to Fink, a specific conception of the transcendental and a development on Kant. What follows from the phenomenological argument and methodological premise, according to Fink, is that the transcendental ego 'contains' the psychological ego²⁵. This new conception of the transcendental leads Fink to conclude that the phenomenological problem of origins leads to paradoxes. The paradoxes concern the logic of an origin of

²³ Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. W. P. Alston and G. Nakhtnikian (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964 [1985]) 35. Quoted in Moran, ed. 2000.

²⁴ "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism" is considered an influential interpretation of Husserl; it is mentioned in Jean-Francois Lyotard's *Phenomenology*, trans. Brian Beakley (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991) and is the only commentator on Husserl that Derrida mentions in "Genesis and Structure".

²⁵ Derrida points to the same 'paradox' resulting from Husserl's 'enigmatic concept' of parallelism, or "if one may say, incorporation" of phenomenological psychology and transcendental phenomenology, which are both "understood as eidetic disciplines [where] the one inhabits the other, as it were implicitly". The difficulty is based in Husserl's estimation of 'both' as abstract eidetic elements of certain methodological premises. Husserl quoted in *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 12.

the world that is at once of this world and extra-worldly. This is, as I pointed out above, an effect of the ontological result being determined by an epistemological (point of) orientation.

II. The Question of Origins, or the Aporia of Phenomenology

In the late *Cartesian Meditations* (1960) Husserl still defines phenomenology in terms of the problems of traditional epistemology²⁶. Phenomenology concerns the possibility of an attainment of knowledge as *apodictic evidence* according to the ideal structures and formations of consciousness. The Husserlian project of phenomenology establishes relations regarding genesis and cognition. Eugen Fink's 1933 essay on Husserl shows that the basic problem of phenomenology is not an epistemological problem, but a problem of genesis or 'the origin of the world'²⁷. "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism" is a response to Husserl's neo-Kantian critics, who according to Fink misunderstood the problem or basic question motivating phenomenology (PPH 94) and consequentially failed to discern the radical opposition between phenomenology and Kantianism.

The difference between phenomenology and Kantianism, according to Fink, is that whereas 'Criticism' or critical philosophy attempts to uncover an absolute presumed to be immanent to the world, phenomenology claims to discover the world as "immanent to the absolute" (PPH 99) according to a method or way of knowing the origin of the world, the 'phenomenological reduction'. The world is always already there, *but as given to and through transcendental subjectivity*. With transcendental phenomenology, the latter

²⁶ See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 1960.

²⁷ Husserl authorised Fink's interpretation of his philosophy. See his *Preface* to Fink's essay in *The Phenomenology of Husserl*, 1970.

becomes the philosophical starting point as discovered through the measures of reduction and double constitution. Fink points out that phenomenology's 'transcending of the world' means that it transcends the "*limitedness* of the natural attitude from which mundane philosophies originate" (99). However, what I argue in this work is that classical phenomenology's project remains in a specific limitedness regarding the relation of genesis and cognition.

Phenomenology's double constitution, or "*the world's becoming in the constitution of transcendental subjectivity*" (130) means that the world, as well as the psychological ego, appears as immanent to or determined according to this absolute subjectivity, that is, as "thematic object of a possible knowledge" (99). According to the relations thus forged of a methodology, which informs a phenomenological epistemology and 'ontology', this structure is the guarantee of 'real' philosophical insight. Fink compares critical and phenomenological philosophy over "the question concerning that realm of meaning which forms the presupposition of all beings" (94) in order to clarify phenomenology's specific approach to transcendent being vis-a-vis the 'world-problem'. As Fink points out, in critical philosophy a presupposition of an a priori form of the world is "the relationship of theoretical validities which are prior to all experience, to the 'transcendental apperception'" (95). That is, the pure form of consciousness corresponds to a 'constructed' epistemological ego; it is non-ontological, a *condition* of experience rather than *of* experience. Thus, for Fink, critical philosophy is world-immanent. Ideal meanings are abstracted from beings within the world and are thus of the world and ontic relations (97). The relationship between ideal meanings and theoretical validities on the one hand and this epistemological ego/pure consciousness on the other, is based on beings (95), but its method of abstraction and construction results in something which is not of experience. When Fink claims that phenomenology is concerned with "the origin of the world" (95), he means with the conditions of possibility for (theoretical) experience and refers to this difference between phenomenology and critical philosophy: the former is not world-immanent but world-transcendent; absolute subjectivity, unlike the empirical ego, is 'originally' world-less. Unlike speculative metaphysics, phenomenology does not make claim to another world in order to explain this world

according to a causal principle. Fink points out that when speculative metaphysics explains transcendence in terms of an abstraction from beings, it is in terms of 'intra-mundane' relations of being to a being on the model of "ground and consequent, creation and product" (95-96). I agree with Fink's contention that transcendence in phenomenology has "an in principle different direction" (99).

For Fink, phenomenology is not motivated by the critical problem of human knowledge; the reduction is not undertaken as a methodological measure to pursue critical philosophy's attempt to clarify the correlation of an a priori form of the world and a pure formal consciousness. Neither is it undertaken as a 'separation' in human consciousness with respect to transcendent objects, that is, as psychological immanence (118). According to Fink, the phenomenological reduction, which to him is reducible to the very idea of phenomenology, allows phenomenology to overcome any ontic relation in its conception of transcendence as it is the transcending *passage* from the world to an absolute: that is, to what is extra-wordly. However, Fink claims that whereas the absolute is not found within the world, it is not to be considered separate from the world as one thing being separate from another. Beyond belief and 'speculative presentment', phenomenology presents the 'world-ground' as object of *theoretical* knowledge or a prototypical 'experience' which brings the object into being as 'evidential' according to the consciousness that contemplates it (97). The carrying out of the reduction as a passage to the absolute of transcendental consciousness re-claims the world within the absolute or the founding structure of *intentionality*: the reduction claims "a transcendence which once again *contains* the world within it" (100). The reduction, as radical reflection upon human subjectivity, 'finds' a 'founding' transcendental subjectivity, which is *known through this reflection*, while irreducible to either being or world. The contention of phenomenology is that the reduction or *époché* gives the origin of the world through an "absolute" which is the access or 'passage' of a transcendental experience/theoretical thought as such: "This knowledge is intuitive if we understand by this true self-givenness and not 'intuition' as a human capacity for knowledge opposed to discursive thought" (126; 83). That is, evidence is postulated "as the basic mode of intentionality in general (of all kinds of *acts*)" with the primacy of the supposed intuitable nature of all knowledge

(83). Fink then continues in a parenthesis: "The 'epistemology' of phenomenological knowledge is a particular problem within the transcendental theory of method" (126). The problem is bound up with the provenance of method in phenomenology; the extent to which method *is* access to an absolute before ontological and epistemological determinations. 'Phenomenology' or the theoretical *exhibiting* of the logos of the world discovered or constituted is the reductive 'transcendental acceptance-phenomenon' which according to this thesis brackets sensibility in an unsustainable manner (130, my emphasis added to Fink's).

Following Husserl, Fink describes the meaning of absolute life or the transcendental subject as *irreal* (127); what determines the *manner* in which absolute life exists in a manner *contra* what *is* the psychological or ontic, is the *clarification* of 'the world' of objects for consciousness by transcendental constitution. Husserl's position concerning the relationship between ego and world is of some complication, in both senses. *Ideas I* presents the view that the ego of the 'transcendental apperception' is constituted through *its* constitution of the world. As what it constitutes is considered a fact of the world, so also is this ego contingent (*Ideas I*, 104-105); this is so to the extent that it is considered from the *viewpoint* of transcendental subjectivity. There is a transparency of access according to this viewpoint defining theoretical knowledge, which significantly reduces the effects of sensibility or sensible being. As the phenomenological concern is with the meaning of being in so far as this denotes how the world *came to be* as a meaningful system, the question becomes: how to delimit and differentiate transcendental life from the psyche of the worldly being? As the latter blurs the reality of the world, that is, the world of ideal meanings, one inquires "back beyond the worldly and objectivised intentional stream of life" through the reduction, which "deobjectifies transcendental life" (PPH 133) according to a 'clarification' of the 'intentional essence' of evidence transcendent to 'the world' and 'self-apperception'.

Fink points out that in *Ideas I* intentionality is somewhat indeterminately described: he coins the term 'act-intentionality'²⁸ and points out how it might be confused with

psychological intentionality as the former is in fact constituted by transcendental intentionality and not constituting (133). According to Fink, act-intentional analysis – as a sort of ‘mid-stage’ of psychological interpretation concerning an explication of subjective acts – is a ‘level’ that must be surpassed in order to view the world through the level in which psychological interpretations are transcendently produced. Fink emphasises a distinction, even ‘opposition’ between the receptivity of psychological ‘intramundane’ intentionality and “transcendental intentionality’s productive character”, where this productivity is not to be conceived along the lines of an ontic relation (133). While “this determination of the essence of constitution as a productive creation may sound [harsh and doctrinaire], it at least indicates the opposite character, a *required being-in-itself character*, to the receptive character of the ontic and mundane (psychical) life of experience” (134). Thus, phenomenology’s fidelity to experience is a removal of (sensible and affective) existence according to method, while the method nevertheless claims a transcendental ‘life’, the “absolute and concrete life which carries the sense of the world’s being totally and concretely within itself” (112). The pretension is that this absolute life guarantees the meaning(s) or Being of being in their universal and constant aspect in the face of change and modification: it is an attempt to clarify the *how* of meanings, the existence of meanings as ideal validities.

It is problematic, as I see it, that what follows from this is that Being as determined through intentional constitution is reduced to intelligibility, to a Reason generated through ‘transcendental life’. On Fink’s interpretation also, Husserl’s constitutive phenomenology argues that not only knowledge, but also the meaning of known being, is constituted by consciousness. Even if the double constitution, as a ‘Being *in* consciousness’ is the effect of a transcendental *viewpoint*, what is clear is that the generation of meaning or sense is limited to the rigidity of a theoretical structure and the abstractions of methodology which would not account for any genesis in terms of

²⁸ Fink describes act-intentionality as bound by a context in which the intentional character “of ‘subjective acts’ in which the ‘world’ (as actual transcendental noema) comes to be accepted and the *habituallities* in terms of which the having-in-acceptance holds as such”, and claims that this explication must be understood as an “anticipation which becomes intelligible in terms of the fundamental relationship between the act-intentional explication of transcendental subjectivity and its analysis in terms of constitution” (PPH 132-33).

embodied being. What is brought to light by the doctrine of phenomenological reduction is a world dependent on subjectivity (138). My point of contention is not with this dependence; the problematic aspect of this model of the relation between genesis and cognition is its lack of determination of the many ways in which experiencing subjectivity is affected as embodied being beyond a ‘“subjectivism” which transcends all mundane forms of subjectivism’ (138). Classical phenomenology fails to account for these. If following Fink, “[t]he true theme of phenomenology is neither the world, on the one hand, nor a transcendental subjectivity which is set over and against the world on the other, but the world’s becoming in the constitution of transcendental subjectivity” (130), there is still a paradox in the separation of transcendental viewpoint and embodied ego. I would say that this particular type of reflection does not get to the real ‘matter of things’. Fink speaks of “the logical paradox of transcendental determinations” (144). I consider this a problem of embodiment, as an inadequate account of what this work terms ‘sensibility’ in reading Emmanuel Levinas and Michel Henry on ‘life’, with reference to the subjective body. The Husserlian separation of essence and existence, if only ‘in principle’, gives a fragile dynamic to the relation that constitutes material and theoretical being.

On a positive note these delineations by classical phenomenology offer up a certain ‘holism’ in its approach to experience; compared with the philosophical tradition, the relation between the object and subject is not theorised as a simple *oppositional* structure of correlates. The phenomenological view of experience is the configuration of a much more complex relation of consciousness and its outside. Experience comprises a subject – object relation where the demarcations are not yet made, a kind of beyond or prior to objectification, idealisation, rationalisation, structures of causality and objective time. Husserl develops his thought increasingly towards this insight as an effect of his demarcations and methodology. In his later works the idea of the life-world, the experience that is a *formation* of the world, in the double sense of constitution, becomes more prominent²⁹. Phenomenology provides the insight that objectivity and consciousness are not easily separated.

The reception and further development of phenomenology has involved a wide and varied branching out and divergence from aspects of Husserl's phenomenology. The divergence is most radically demonstrated in the skepticism as to the value and possibility of the practice and idea of phenomenological reduction and the rigidity of the structure of intentionality.

The theoretical determination of *knowledge* in Husserlian phenomenology is ultimately based in the idea of objectivity for intentional subjectivity only. The problem with the Husserlian project lies not in this relation but in the specific structure of a *teleological reason*, which always already animates the act of constitution in which objectivity for subjectivity is established.

III. Derrida: Phenomenology and Genesis

In the *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl's thought developed an emphasis on the fundamental role of *passive synthesis*, which implies that consciousness does not constitute its object but rather uncovers it as it receives it. However, as Jacques Derrida has pointed out, the notion of the transcendent object received by consciousness in 'passivity' involves an infinite regress of genetic processes, as there must always already have been a constituted object for consciousness to receive³⁰; phenomenological 'beginnings' remain problematic. More importantly, he points out that for Husserl such infinite historic regression is animated by a *universal reason*³¹, which then produces infinite historic progression. Teleological reason animates a history that becomes

²⁹ Refer to Edmund Husserl's later writings such as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. D. Carr, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

³⁰ See Jacques Derrida, "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978) 154 -168. Hereafter GS.

³¹ See GS 166-67, especially.

synonymous with the production of transcendent being. It is in this sense – or on a parallel logic – that Husserl conceives phenomenology as an infinite task of knowledge. Derrida describes it as “the *eidos* of a historicity, and thus of the movement of meaning – which is necessarily a rational movement” (GS 165). In other words, Husserl’s phenomenology adheres to the idea of the *logos* as an infinite production by reason. In Husserl, genesis – also passive genesis – thus has a determinate beginning and end:

Reason unveils itself. Reason, Husserl says, is the *logos* that produces itself in History. It traverses being in view of itself, in view of appearing to itself, that is, as *Logos*, saying and hearing itself, within the living present of its self-presence (166).

Phenomenology claims a production of knowledge in terms of evidence and the essence of transcendent being. Husserlian phenomenology restricts its claim of attention to phenomena, ‘things in themselves’, with the claim to an insight into truths of essences of an a priori character, apart from empirical content. Phenomenology’s transcendental determinations are set in the present, with the metaphysical claim to presence, that is, by a presence of the object for subjectivity and the self-presence of this subjectivity. Thus genesis, cognition and their relation in phenomenology are marked by a paradox. The logical paradox of transcendental determinations is the problem or *aporia*, which marks all of Derrida’s work. Preceding this problem and irreducibly linked to it, is the problem of “the origin of the world” or of genesis³². The problem is taken up in Derrida’s early work on Husserl’s phenomenology as the question of genesis and structure³³. Derrida criticises Husserl’s phenomenology for closing off genesis by structure: it follows that the critique of phenomenology’s teleology of reason is a critique of its archaeology or

³² The phrase is taken from Eugen Fink, “The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism”.

³³ “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” was first written for a 1959 conference on genesis and structure but went through several revisions before its inclusion in Derrida’s 1967 *Writing and Difference*. This prolonged period of revision shows that the work contains a sustainable critique of Husserl’s phenomenology.

'architectonic'³⁴; the aporia is constitutive and unavoidable. Derrida's "'Genesis and Structure' and Phenomenology" seems to be a double critique, partly within phenomenology, and partly a critique conducted outside the phenomenological framework as a deconstruction of what Derrida sees as its metaphysics of presence.

(a) "Genesis and Structure" and the Problem of Origins

"Genesis and Structure" begins by acknowledging the aims of phenomenological philosophy: the phenomenologist is described in his intention as

[a] 'true positivist' who attends to the things themselves [and] the originality and primordially of meanings. The process of a faithful comprehension or description, and the continuity of explication must dispel the shadow of a choice [concerning the question of structure *or* genesis]. Thus one might say...that Husserl, by his rejection of system and speculative closure, and by virtue of the style of his thought, is attuned to the historicity of meaning and to the possibility of its becoming, and is also respectful of that which remains open within structure. And even when one comes to think that the opening of the structure is 'structural', that is, essential, one already has progressed to an order heterogeneous to the first one: the *difference* between the (necessarily) closed minor structure and the structurality of an opening—(GS 155).

These comments by Derrida are made within phenomenological premises, according to his intention. Derrida concludes, however that a true genesis is closed off by structure in

³⁴ Derrida claims that Edmund Husserl has an architectonic conception of a historical reason and its role in the infinite production of knowledge, which inadequately accounts for the effects of language in a broad sense on the constitution of meaning/knowledge. See Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey and ed. David B. Allison (New York: Nicolas Hays Ltd., 1978).

Husserl's phenomenology. The deconstructive critique follows from tracing movements interior to phenomenology, thus supporting the notion that genesis is necessarily closed off by structure and the necessary impossibility of anything but a both-and approach to the question of structure and genesis. "Genesis and Structure" accords phenomenology a status within metaphysics. This is despite the fact that Husserl had always tried to resist a type of thinking which would be speculative "or 'dialectical' ...in the sense that Husserl, at least, always sought to ascribe to this word" (154-5) and that, according to Derrida, the issue of a choice between two different modes of description – structural or genetic – would not be in accordance with phenomenological thinking: in phenomenological description the thing itself determines whether structural or genetic description would be appropriate³⁵. Despite this initial assessment, set within phenomenological thinking, Derrida argues: "A debate [between genesis and structure] regulates and gives its rhythm to the speed of [the] descriptions [of Husserlian phenomenology] ...and [because incomplete] leaves every major stage of phenomenology unbalanced" (157). Derrida's argument or "hypothesis" in this essay, is that Husserl responds to this debate between genesis and structure by "appearing" to "transgress the purely descriptive space and transcendental pretension of his research towards a metaphysics of history in which the solid structure of a *Telos* would permit him to *re-appropriate*, by making it essential and by in some way prescribing its horizon"³⁶, an *untamed genesis* which ...seemed to accommodate itself less and less to phenomenological apriorism and to transcendental idealism" (157, my emphasis). Derrida suggests that Husserl thus falls into a sort of "dialectic" or metaphysics, of a minor structure regulated by a larger historico – teleological structure: "'...a teleological reason [runs] throughout all historicity' and particularly 'the unity of the history of the *ego*'"³⁷. Derrida attempts to ground the

³⁵ GS, p. 155. Derrida states that the question of structure and genesis seems to be neutralised in the idea of the givens of phenomenological philosophy as "two always complementary operative concepts". The concepts as such simply fall into the 'given' tensions of phenomenology as "a philosophy of essences always considered in their objectivity, intangibility, apriority; but by the same token, a philosophy of experience, of becoming, of the temporal flux of what is lived, which is the ultimate reference; it is also a philosophy in which the notion of 'transcendental experience' designates the very field of reflection" (155).

³⁶ That is, this *telos* is considered both essentially belonging to history as its internal movement and prescribed to it from outside history, by philosophy.

hypothesis concerning phenomenology and metaphysics through Husserl's later writings – after *Ideas I*³⁷ – to the extent that these elucidate “problems of genetic phenomenology” (164).

Derrida bases his claim of the emergence of a ‘dialectic’ or metaphysics on Husserl's descriptions of a teleological reason which animates history, intending a future Idea in the Kantian sense, that is an infinite Idea, the idea of truth (GS 160):

The presence of *Telos* or *Vorhaben* – the infinite theoretical anticipation which simultaneously is given as an infinite practical task – for phenomenological consciousness is indicated every time that Husserl speaks of an *Idea in the Kantian sense*. The latter is offered within phenomenological self-evidence as evidence of an essential overflowing of actual and adequate self-evidence. Perhaps it would appear then that this Idea is the Idea or very project of phenomenology's source or end (167).

Derrida argues that this correlation between teleological reason and the intention of idealisation or infinitisation does not make up two poles grounded by adequate self-evidence. Derrida takes up the question of structure and genesis *within* phenomenology, thus going against what seems to be phenomenology's assumption, that this question only presents itself outside the borders of phenomenology (161). Derrida works *within* the phenomenological principle of intuitive self-evidence.

³⁷ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, 1970 and *Cartesian Meditations*, 1960, both quoted in *Writing and Difference*, p.165. Derrida mentions here (165) how Husserl in the *Cartesian Meditations* presents genetic description of the *ego* in terms of a prescription for a sort of *universal* genetic phenomenology or ‘ultimate genesis’. See *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 76 –7.

³⁸ Derrida points out that there is, “from the structural analyses of static constitution practiced in *Ideen I* (1913) to the analyses of genetic constitution which follow”, not so much a real transition but a progress “which implies no ‘surpassing’... [Husserl's ongoing development of the initial work] leaves intact what has been uncovered...the baring of both the genetic foundations and the original productivity not only neither shakes nor ruins the superficial structures already unearthed, but also brings eidetic forms once again to light, that is the ‘structural a prioris’ – this is Husserl's expression – of genesis itself” (GS, 156).

Derrida argues that the question of structure and genesis appears to be outside phenomenological space as phenomenology posits a common root of both *operative concepts* of genesis and structure. Husserlian phenomenology operates according to an attempt to move between “logisising structuralism and psychologistic geneticism (even in the form of the ‘transcendental psychologism’ attributed to Kant)” (158). That is, Husserl wants to *maintain* on the one hand the autonomy and normative assumption attributed to logico-mathematical ideality with respect to factual consciousness and, on the other hand, its *original* dependence with respect to a concrete subjectivity, conceived generally (158, my emphases). This is his ‘new direction of philosophical attention’, and this ‘different direction’ concerns the instatement of a “concrete, but non-empirical intentionality” (158), the constitutive subjectivity of transcendental experience, the ‘field’ and origin of transcendental reflection. Importantly, intentionality operates both in terms of activity and passivity; it is – as intelligibility – a capacity for production as well as revelation. As seen above, Fink recognised that ‘constitution’ can be read as ‘construction’, ‘production’ and also ‘creation’.

As I have pointed out, I would disagree with the employment of the term ‘creation’ to the extent that the structurally bound genesis of classical phenomenology – as it bypasses sensible being – cannot involve any real production of the new. However, Husserl does speak in his later works of the *act of synthesis* constituting for consciousness objects as products: ‘new’ objects that would grasp something now as a part, now as a collectivity³⁹. He uses also words such as ‘manifesting’ and ‘exhibiting’ in the same manner as ‘constituting’. As this is bound up with the transcendental reduction, eidetic seeing and the foundation of objectivity, the notion of a unity, an original unity and root of activity and passivity is, as Derrida recognises, “from quite early on the very possibility of meaning for Husserl. And this common root will ceaselessly be experienced as the common root of structure *and* genesis” (GS 158). Access to the common root of activity and passivity is presupposed throughout the reductions, which are meant to neutralise and criticise ‘worldly genesis’ or the ‘positivism of a science of facts’, which

³⁹ *Cartesian Meditations*, p.77.

would claim closure in factuality (159). Thus the phenomenological critique claims to deal with a space prior to the demarcations of structure or genesis. The phenomenological clarification of objectivity in its foundation is considered primary with respect to the already implied clarifications of structural and genetic description, which are considered to be part of a secondary empirical reality: "It is the radicalization of psychology and history that made the transition to the phenomenological attitude necessary" (161). Derrida is here still commenting on the issue of structure and genesis according to the phenomenological project, on the borders of phenomenology; he points out that according to phenomenology it is considered a parallel – but not a same – problem within the phenomenological space. Derrida recognises that the phenomenological description and 'constitutive analyses' of *Ideas I* are "resolutely static and structural in design" (161). Apart from the attempt to disassociate phenomenological analysis from factual, causal – that is, historicist and psychologistic – genetic analysis, *Ideas I* is concerned to delineate the correlation of a formality of objectivity and intuitive consciousness, *in general*. Husserl's principle of all principles defines self-evidence as a foundation that is to secure, according to Derrida, "the ultimate critical and phenomenological jurisdiction, under which the most ambitious genetic description later will be subsumed" (161). Derrida approaches the structure-genesis problem in terms of a 'question of closure and opening'.

To the extent that phenomenology, in its investigation of the foundation of objectivity, deals with the *essence* of consciousness, it is a structuralism. Derrida focuses on the difference in Husserlian phenomenology between exact and inexact – or 'anexact' according to Derrida – essences. Descriptive eidetic phenomenology, although modeled on a mathematical attempt to delineate idealities, does not attempt to delineate ideal validities according to mathematics' implied possibility of closure. The domain delineated by phenomenology is not considered exhaustive; its determinations as regards the foundation of objectivity are presumed to be infinite. Derrida points out that phenomenological investigation, which is a morphological and not an 'exact' science, rather than attempting to produce a finite totality according to objects already delineated, concerns phenomena or essences of consciousness which cannot be confined to a

mathematical model of structurality or 'definitude': what is retained in this comparison, according to Derrida, is in fact

a principled, essential and structural impossibility of closing a structural phenomenology. It is the infinite opening of what is experienced, which is designated at several moments of Husserlian analysis by reference to an *Idea in the Kantian sense*, that is, the irruption of the infinite into consciousness, which permits the temporal flux of consciousness just as it unifies the object and the world by anticipation, and despite an irreducible incompleteness. It is the strange *presence* of this Idea which also permits every transition to the limit and the production of all exactitude (162).

That is, although the Idea permits these unifications – the unification of temporal consciousness as well as object and world – it produces a rupture or opening, a discontinuity of consciousness which cannot be reduced to the process of idealisation or infinitisation that characterises only a *modification* of the object within the finite totality presumed by mathematical or 'exact' science.

Derrida elaborates the question of closure or opening by turning to another type of difference within Husserl's phenomenology, the differences which make up the structure of transcendental intentionality. According to *Ideas I*, intentionality is an original structure, an 'archi-structure' (162). Derrida delineates the complexity of the structure, with its double correlation – the noesis and noema, and the *morphe-hyle*. Derrida's concern lies with the noema, which as Derrida recognises, is "distinguished in that [it] does not belong to consciousness in a *real* way. *Within* consciousness, in general there is an agency which *does not really* belong to it" (163). Derrida isolates this as a decisive theme. As Fink pointed out, the noema is neither of the world nor of consciousness, really, but of the world for consciousness. The noema's nonbelonging to any region – even to the 'archi-region', as Derrida points out – makes the noema "the root and very possibility of objectivity and of meaning. [Whereas it may be] laid bare only on the basis of intentional consciousness, it does not borrow from intentional consciousness...its

‘material’” (163). For Derrida this ‘anarchy of the noema’ is the “opening to the ‘as such’ of Being and to the determination of the totality of regions in general [and] cannot be described, *stricto sensu and simply*, on the basis of a determined regional structure” (163). According to my argument here, the noema so conceived opens up to the domain of material being *as such*, that is, what I have designated as a sensible or sensibility that exceeds the intelligible. The *hyle* is seen as a similar opening or rupture in consciousness; as non-intentional but real, it is a *possibility of receptivity* in experience; “it is the *sensate material of affect* before any animation by intentional form” (163, my emphases.) The hyletic element of experience is the receptivity or passivity which allows the emergence into consciousness of what is other than consciousness. In *Ideas I*, Husserl does not develop the problem of temporal constitution as it is bound up with the hyle. Derrida concludes that as the interrogation of the hyle “in its pure ingenuity”, that is, as temporal matter, is renounced⁴⁰, there is a problem as concerns genesis and structure: “if [Husserl] renounces the examination of the possibilities entitled *formless materials and immaterial forms*, if he keeps to the constituted *hyle-morphic* correlation, it is that his analyses are still developed (and will they not always be so, in a certain way?) from within a *constituted temporality*” (GS 163).

The hyle, for Derrida, is the possibility of genesis itself, genesis irreducible to consciousness. Derrida argues that to the extent that Husserl refrains from an adequate development of the notions of alterity and temporality, as these follow the two poles of opening (the noema and the hyle), he remains within metaphysics. Metaphysics for Derrida is the metaphysics of presence⁴¹. According to Derrida’s argument, Husserlian phenomenology refrains from responding to a necessity for transition to a genetic constitution that arises out of these considerations of the two poles: “and the new ‘transcendental aesthetic’ will be deferred always... It is that the constitution of the other and of time refers phenomenology to a zone in which its ‘principle of all principles’ (as we see it, its *metaphysical* principle: the *original self-evidence* and *presence* of the thing

⁴⁰ Derrida refers specifically to *Ideas*, third book, chapters 2 and 4.

⁴¹ See also Jacques Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics”, in *Writing and Difference*, p. 121 in particular.

itself) is radically put into question. In any event, the necessity of this transition from the structural to the genetic is nothing less than the necessity of a break or a conversion" (GS 164). Derrida is concerned to point out what he sees as a tension within Husserl's notion of evidential intuition or presence. The idea of a telos or reason as the positing of an origin and end to genesis is disrupted by the hyletic element of experience and the 'anarchy of the noema', and thus from within the structure of transcendental consciousness. Derrida concludes that there is no intuitive self-evidence for exhaustive self-presence, because of this opening within the structure. Pure material being provides a sense or 'signification', which always already disrupts and precludes such closure. The deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence takes this tension in Husserl's 'metaphysical principle' and concludes that the Idea in the Kantian sense "is offered within phenomenological self-evidence as evidence of an essential overflowing of actual and adequate self-evidence" (167). What is left unrecognised is the extent to which a sensible always already exceeds the intelligible or essential of phenomenological self-evidence. The *Cartesian Meditations* shows how evidence is not a-temporal; nor is it a matter of logic or psychology, but of 'experience':

Thus evidence is a universal mode [that is, feature] of intentionality, related to the whole field of consciousness. Thanks to evidence, the life of consciousness has an all-pervasive teleological structure, a pointedness towards reason and even a pervasive tendency towards it, that is toward the discovery of correctness... (48).

Derrida asks what it would mean, what significance we might encounter if we asked the question of genesis and structure in general:

What does the notion of genesis *in general*, on whose basis the Husserlian diffraction could come forth and be understood, mean, and what has it always meant? What does the notion of structure *in general*, on whose basis Husserl *operates* and operates distinctions between empirical, eidetic, and transcendental dimensions mean, and what has it always meant through its displacements? And

what is the historico-semantic relationship between genesis and structure *in general*? (GS 167)

Such a question involves for Derrida the question of the 'origin of the world'⁴². To ask this question of the meaning of the notions of structure and genesis in general "is to interrogate that which precedes the reduction" (167)); it is that which is before the distinctions of phenomenological analysis, such as the distinctions between exact and anexact, real and unreal. The "passage to infinity" is described as the "structurality of the opening" (164); it is the experience of that which transcends any single experience and is therefore structured beyond consciousness 'here and now' to open for a consciousness in general, but the 'opening' is the 'nothing which divides parallels' (164). A "nothing" in this sense, is a kind of in-between of theory and materiality; it is according to Derrida, what admits the distance that separates transcendental phenomenology and phenomenological psychology. The 'nothing' as a name for what *is between* in a parallelism, is, as this thesis argues, the space of real genesis, as the production of the new. As such I see it as 'the invisible in the visible', in a rephrasing of the title of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's last unfinished work⁴³. For Derrida, parallelism is what "liberates the space of a transcendental question [and the] nothing is what permits the transcendental reduction [in phenomenology]. [Paradoxically] the transcendental reduction is what directs our attention to this nothing in which the totality of meaning and the meaning of totality permit their origin to appear. That is, according to Fink's expression, the origin of the world" (164). Constitution in classical phenomenology does involve an infinity according to the *Cartesian Meditations*, but the irruption into consciousness of what is other is always already the movement of *reason*, the ego "existent for himself in *continuous evidence*; ...constantly constituting himself as existing, ...the flowing cogito⁴⁴". Synthesis is fundamentally identification; identity is essentially the intentional effect produced by the synthesis of consciousness itself.

⁴² Derrida explicitly quotes Fink, although the phrase appears in a different immediate context in the essay.

⁴³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968 [1964]). I shall return to this point in chapter two.

⁴⁴ Husserl quoted from *Cartesian Meditations* in *Writing and Difference*, p. 323. My emphasis.

Objective meaning is immanent objective meaning, constituted by a constitutive movement of reason, whether passively or actively⁴⁵.

The *cogito-cogitatum* is also the genesis of the ego, according to classical phenomenology. The sense of origin cannot be the beginning of something new, if we follow the schemas of classical phenomenology. The phenomenological notion of origin is irreducibly bound up with recognisability; intentionality is, in a sense, the problem of a reductive recognisability. Derrida comments in *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, that with respect to (geometrical) sense what is always determined first is "the general conditions of its Objectivity and of the Objectivity of ideal objectivities" (64). This means:

The sense of the constituting act can only be deciphered in the web of the constituted object. And this necessity is not an external fate, but an essential necessity of intentionality. The *primordial* sense of every intentional act is *only* its *final* sense, i.e., the constitution of an object (in the broadest sense of these terms). That is why only a teleology can open up a passage, a way back toward the beginnings. If the sense of geometrical sense is Objectivity or the intention of Objectivity, if geometry is the exemplary of being scientific, and if history is the highest and most revelatory possibility of a universal history (the concept of which would not exist without it), then the sense of sense in general is here determined as *object*: as some thing that is available in general and first for a regard or gaze (64).

Derrida recognises that for phenomenology, "the object in general is the final category of everything that can appear [and] sense-production must have first presented itself as evidence in the personal consciousness" (64). Insofar as the object is what remains the same through time, both the origin and sense are reduced to a geometrical schematism. That is, "[t]he *worldly image* of *gaze* would not be the unnoticed model of the theoretical

⁴⁵ *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 77- 81.

attitude of pure consciousness but, on the contrary, would borrow its sense from that attitude" (64, my emphases added to Derrida's)

According to Fink, 'being' or objectivity means being for consciousness. Phenomenology always retains the idea of *correlation* as defining the relationship of world and consciousness; the world is always retained as horizon and in this sense is always thought as a 'pregiven', with the subject 'containing', *so to speak*, all the meanings of this being for consciousness. Subjectivity, which in phenomenology is both subject and object of an investigation concerning the foundation of objectivity, might attempt to deal with world and object as other than consciousness, but limited by a 'geometrism' of constitutive correlation, does not take into account the genesis which informs its own manifestation as subjectivity *always already affected* by objectivity. It cannot do so, because the dimension of sensible being is theorised only as *for* subjectivity, not *of* subjectivity as the latter's affection by materiality. This latter dimension would be outside the framework of classical phenomenology. Bodily being is not thought beyond the intentional structure. Husserl does develop the notion of intentionality into different 'types', and thus attempts accounts of embodied meaning-intending structures outside the sphere of rational consciousness. It is my contention, however, that as the focus remains within the limitations of the sphere of rational awareness with respect to intentionality, classical phenomenology does not sufficiently account for the order of embodied existence that *always already* disrupts or irrupts into self-awareness and thus informs conscious awareness. An awareness and self-awareness of, and by, an always already embodied subjectivity, provides a notion of *continuity* with respect to how existence relates to "essence". This continuity is not determined by what is recognisable to consciousness. Derrida's consideration of genesis in classical phenomenology states that

[P]henomenology cannot and may not describe anything but the intentional modifications of the *eidos ego* in general. [In the earlier works] the genealogy of logic kept to the realm of *cogitata* and the acts of the *ego* as if to its proper existence and *life*; and these were read only on the basis of noematic signs and results (165).

When the *Cartesian Meditations* states that it is a question again of returning to the *cogito-cogitatum* relation in order to comprehend the genesis of the ego, Derrida points out that apart from the activity-passivity problem, “this genetic description of the *ego* will encounter limits, which we would be tempted to call definitive, but which Husserl considers provisional, as they derive from the fact that phenomenology is only at its beginnings”⁴⁶. Both Derrida and Husserl here refer to the idea not only of ‘ultimate genesis’⁴⁷ but to the idea of a ‘universal genetic phenomenology’ (GS 165). There are two points to be made here that are of specific interest to the development of this thesis. The first point is that the genetic descriptions of classical phenomenology necessarily encounter limits. Derrida raises a concern which points directly to the idea of a structure of genesis and constitution which must exclude a sensible for an intelligible. The epistemological concept of evidence that defines the structure of *cogito-cogitatum* prompts a move to a concept of experience, which Derrida reads in Husserl’s discussions of temporality and alterity, and is also seen in his *Speech and Phenomena*. The deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence in the latter work on Husserl is based in an *experience of language*. Within “Genesis and Structure” Derrida points towards the direction of language – that

[i]n emerging from itself, hearing oneself speak constitutes itself as the history of reason through the detour of *writing*. Thus it differs from itself in order to *reappropriate itself*. *The Origin of Geometry* describes the necessity of this exposition of reason in a worldly inscription. An exposition indispensable to the constitution of truth and the ideality of objects, but which is also the danger to meaning from what is outside the sign (166).

In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida develops the idea that in order to *be* and to be infinite, sense must pass through an inscription. Thus the Idea in the Kantian sense must for

⁴⁶ *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 76-77. Quoted in GS p. 165.

⁴⁷ *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 76.

Derrida be constituted through signification. For Derrida this concerns an elaboration of the significance of writing. For the purposes of this work, this allows a move towards a discussion of a sensible, which exceeds the intelligible, and a specific notion of continuity with regard to theory and materiality. Derrida points to an internal necessity of language to experience and thought, and thus attempts to theorise what I see as a certain in-between of theory and materiality⁴⁸.

The second point concerns the problematic notion of 'ultimate genesis' as this is bound up, for Husserl, with the idea of a 'universal phenomenology'. Derrida quotes the *Cartesian Meditations* in a footnote:

Since the monadically concrete ego includes also the whole of actual and potential conscious life, it is clear that the problem of explicating this *monadic ego phenomenologically* (the problem of the constitution for himself) must include *all constitutional problems without exception*. Consequently, the phenomenology of this *self-constitution* coincides with *phenomenology as a whole*⁴⁹.

This raises the problem of the relation between phenomenological object and phenomenological analysis. One aspect of this problem is that of the methodological assumptions, according to which ontology is determined by epistemology. Another aspect is pointed out by Derrida in the question of how affirmations of evidence and self-evidence, "made necessary *by* and *in* phenomenology itself, [may] be totally certain within phenomenology, [as] it does not only concern phenomena that are experienced and self-evident" (GS 165)⁵⁰.

⁴⁸ Derrida speaks in his work on Levinas and Husserl about the contamination of the phenomenon by the sign. See "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 129.

⁴⁹ Edmund Husserl in *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 68. Quoted in *Writing and Difference*, p. 323.

⁵⁰ These are the points which inform Michel Henry's critique in "Material Phenomenology and Language, or Pathos and Language", 1999. I will discuss this essay in chapter two.

Derrida argues, with respect to the 'irruption of the logos', or the "accession to human consciousness of the idea of an infinite task of reason" (165), that "these ruptures, which at the same time are unveilings, (and also coverings up, for the origin dissimulates itself immediately beneath the new domain of uncovered or produced objectivity) *are always already indicated*" (165). This is what is meant by 'the structurality of the opening', or that which 'differs from itself in order to re-appropriate itself'. Derrida points to the inability of classical phenomenology to indicate that which escapes the structures of the *cogito-cogitatum*, and the reason-evidence correlation, which ultimately defines the phenomenological framework. This inability to *indicate* its other, the sensible of material genesis, is what makes a notion such as 'ultimate genesis' inadequate, and thus a paradox or aporia within the phenomenological framework. The sensible or 'sensitivity', on my view, is the indication of a sensible which exceeds the intelligible, where the latter is based on the presumption of the exhaustive rational capacity of constitutive subjectivity. In the next section I will elaborate this argument through a consideration of Derrida's notion of the contamination of the phenomenon by the sign, as it is developed through his notions of the trace and *différance*.

(b) Contamination rather than Continuity: Derrida on Phenomenology, Language and Signification

This thesis argues that the phenomenological approach is constituted by an element or awareness of *continuity* in different degrees through its various developments. The aspects of classical phenomenology that I engage with are approached in terms of the importance I place in a specific notion of continuity with respect to cognition and the epistemological and ontological formation of subjectivity. My argument is that classical phenomenology cannot account for an adequate notion of continuity, and this is because of its neglect of affective and sensible genesis. An adequate notion of continuity provides the point of transition for a consideration of materiality with respect to aspects of

phenomenological thinking and the development of a notion of a sensible, which exceeds the intelligible with respect to cognition. This section investigates Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*⁵¹ to the extent that it involves a development from the question of genesis to the question of the sign or signification. It furthers thereby a consideration of phenomenological issues in terms of the question of materiality and cognition, that is, Derrida raises the question of contamination. My argument is that Derrida's notion of contamination, as a specific development on phenomenological continuity, shows the impasse in classical phenomenology and provides a way out of it.

The thesis of *Speech and Phenomena* is stated in "Violence and Metaphysics" also, as follows: "the phenomenon supposes originary contamination by the sign"⁵². I see this as the recognition of a prior materiality, of language and signification in a broad sense, and argue that Derrida approaches a notion of a sensible, which exceeds the intelligible. The concern here is with what may be termed a prior 'phenomenality', following Henry, a condition and conditioning of phenomenal manifestation and constitution by intentional subjectivity and phenomenal analysis. This priority – in both senses of the word, according to this thesis – of a material signification as it informs phenomenality, is evident in Derrida's elaboration of signification in the face of phenomenological analysis.

Speech and Phenomena concerns the very nature of phenomenology; it is a critique of its presupposition: the idea of correlative presence, as regards the relations of subject and object of, and in, phenomenal analysis. Derrida emphasises, with phenomenology, *experience* as the event of the *living present*; he does not deny the foundational presupposition of presence. Derrida concerns himself, however, with the irruption into presence of something other, and in this respect, with the extent to which Husserlian phenomenology broaches the themes of non-presence: alterity and temporality. *Speech and Phenomena* asks the question of the sign within this context of alterity and temporality; the larger context is the 'metaphysics of presence'. Derrida thus attempts to

⁵¹ Hereafter quoted as SP.

⁵² "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 129.

pose the question of its outside, from inside the presumptions of the metaphysics of presence.

When Derrida approaches the question of the essence of the phenomenological project⁵³, his focus is on the 'essential distinction' with which Husserl's *Logical Investigations* opens: *the distinction of expression and indication in the sign*. The focus of Husserlian phenomenological analysis is "the authentic mode of ideality"⁵⁴. Presence, understood in terms of the living present, is "the ultimate form of ideality" and "the founding concept of phenomenology as metaphysics":

Presence has always been and will always be, to infinity, the form in which – we can say this apodictically – the infinite diversity of content will be produced. *The opposition* – which inaugurates metaphysics – *between form and matter* finds in the concrete ideality of the living present its ultimate and radical justification.
(6, my emphases)

Presence, on Derrida's conception, is "the absolute proximity of self-identity, *the object being in front of as available for repetition*" and "the ideal form of self-presence of transcendental life, whose ideal identity allows *idealiter* the repetition to infinity" (99). The *aporia* which Derrida speaks of with respect to phenomenology concerns presence and iterability. Iterability provides the distinction between ideality/essence and factuality: whereas a fact must be considered as a singularity, ideality is what may be infinitely repeated. However, this means that ideality is beyond the grasp of the reality of intuition, even if intuition here is understood according to Fink's interpretation as 'true self-givenness'. It is in this sense that Being is being object in Husserlian phenomenology, it is why – ideally – the objective can within the phenomenological framework be said to 'substitute' the subjective (100), and this is why cognition is ultimately considered in

⁵³ *Writing and Difference*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ As Derrida points out in this respect, while Husserl describes the results of phenomenology as metaphysics in § 60 of the *Cartesian Meditations*, he distinguishes a 'degenerate' metaphysics (Platonism) as "blindness before the authentic mode of ideality" (SP, 6).

epistemological terms at the expense of ontology, especially ontology considered in terms of material formation. It is in this sense that classical phenomenology crucially *overlooks* the fact that cognition is bound up with a sensible of embodied existence, which exceeds the intelligible. Ideality works on the assumption that – ideally – we can substitute objective content, supposed to be univocal, for the equivocal expressions of indication or the indexical. In the first chapter of *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida says:

[A]nalysis will therefore advance in this separation between existence and essence [or *de facto* and *de jure*], reality and intentional function...[W]e would be tempted to say that this separation, *which defines the very space of phenomenology, does not exist prior to the question of language*, nor does it enter into it, so to speak, as into an already bounded domain or as one problem among others; it is discovered in and through the possibility of language. And its *de jure* import, the right to a distinction between fact and intention, depends entirely on language and, in language, on the validity of a radical distinction between indication and expression (21).

Language is the condition of possibility for a distinction between essence or ‘in principle’ and fact. Furthermore, language considered *de jure*, as this condition, depends on the validity of a distinction between indication and expression, which according to Husserl is an ideal or in principle distinction. The latter distinction is based on the distinction of fact and essence that it was meant to justify. We require language to differentiate singular fact from ideal, but language is always already ideal. The paradox is that a condition of possibility must thus be seen to depend on that which it conditions. This is the paradox or aporia of *différance*. Derrida’s notion of *différance* is usually approached in terms of its sense of difference and delay but here, as at later points in *Speech and Phenomena*, it is defined in terms of this distinction between essence/ideality and fact. The aporia regards iterability, as the possibility of differentiation between ideality and fact and it regards presence, as its impossibility, in fact:

[A]ll of what is thought purely in this concept [of presence], being by the same

blow determined as ideality, the living present is *in fact* really, actually deferred. This *différance* is the difference between ideality and non-ideality (99).

What this aporia points to is that the difference here cannot be guaranteed as an opposition; because a form or ideality can never be given as such, we cannot *really* say that there is a difference between form and content. That is, the distinction cannot be maintained as an opposition because iterability concerns what is 'in principle' and not really, the content of intuition. As long as the condition can be seen to depend on that which it conditions, we are left with a paradox with respect to transcendental determinations. This takes up again the problem concerning the Idea in a Kantian sense:

As the ideal is always thought by Husserl in the form of an Idea in the Kantian sense, [the] substitution of ideality for nonidentity, of objectivity for non-objectivity, is infinitely *deferred* (100).

The notion of ideality is based in the possibility of difference between the notion of an infinite and a finite; as infinity is given according to a finite intuition, infinity as such is not given, and not presentable. Iterability is the impossibility of being present/in presence; the 'in principle' is not present *as such*. The process towards the experience of this aporia is the process of *deconstruction*, the institution of a "a kind of insecurity [within the metaphysics of presence] to open it up to the outside. This can only be done from a certain inside" (57 n6). The experience of *différance* or this aporia is thus an opening towards an outside of phenomenological analysis. Derrida asks: " what does presence mean, taken as *différance ad infinitum*?" (101). Derrida comments that Husserlian phenomenology does not adequately account for sense and signification:

[Husserl does not make] ... a theme of the 'diacritical' work of difference in the constitution of sense and signs...[and ultimately] the whole phenomenological discourse is ...caught up within the schema of a metaphysics of presence which relentlessly exhausts itself in trying to make difference derivative (101).

According to Derrida's estimation of phenomenology's reliance on presence, the answer to the question of the meaning of 'to infinity' is that the movement or purpose, the presumption of telos, would be "the unity of the concept, of the logos, and consciousness in a voice without *différance*" (102). The *priority* of signification is what would disrupt this identity and presence, what would signal an outside: the trace or the sensible.

According to Derrida, difference is prior: when Derrida talks of how life must be itself and its other (empiricity as the possibility of death), this concept of life concerns that which precedes the reductions of phenomenology, whether transcendental or eidetic. Derrida's "ultra-transcendental concept of life" refers precisely to the claim to a priority of difference, as not derived. The concept consists in a heterogeneity between transcendental life and empirical life, differentiated by "the nothing" (10-12), rather than thought in terms of ontic difference. This concept of life is central to the argument of *Speech and Phenomena*:

[T]he unity of these two parallels, which relates one to the other, does not let itself be distributed by them and dividing itself joins finally the transcendental to its other; this unity is *life*. [This life] is thus the name for what precedes the reduction and *escapes finally from all the distributions that the reduction makes appear*. But this is *because it is its own distribution* and its own opposition to its other. By determining 'living' in this way, we come to designate the insecurity of the discourse (14-15, my emphases).

When Derrida says that life or 'the psyche' is "the self-relation, whether or not in the form of consciousness" (14), this refers to the voice as what hears itself. This self-relation is a "unity" but nevertheless a relation. The self-relation, as demonstrated in the voice, is not identical because – and this is crucially in line with what comes out of Michel Henry's material phenomenology – it also involves something other, the materiality of its possibility. The sense bound up with the voice is materially embodied. However, within phenomenological thought, "the voice would be this spiritual flesh that continues to speak and be present to itself – to hear itself – in the absence of the world" (16). The 'phenomen-ological voice' rests in the dependency between logos/voice and

phenomenon⁵⁵. As phenomenology joins “the signified concept to the signifying ‘phonic complex’ ...and a perhaps naïve treatment of the concept ‘word’ [phenomenology] has left unresolved the tension of [its] two major motifs: the purity of formalism and the radicality of intuitionism” (16).

The aporia of classical phenomenology is, according to Derrida, precisely the result of life’s ‘self-distributions’, precedent with respect to phenomenology’s reductions. Life’s self-distribution is also the precedent in the positive sense of bringing about the contaminations on which the argument of *Speech and Phenomena* is based.

To the extent that life is not just itself, but also its other, this means other as “taken, that is, contaminated” (20). Life is itself and other than itself, that is, always already taken by ‘non-presence’⁵⁶; it is (in)-formed by alterity and temporalisation. In the following I will take up some of Derrida’s comments on alterity and temporalisation in phenomenology, as these themes relate to the notions of indication and expression and the larger issue of contamination and continuity⁵⁷.

Husserl’s argument in the *Logical Investigations* regarding indication and expression runs as follows: “solitary mental life” proves that expression without indication is possible (SP 48). The aim is to isolate expression by determining indication as exterior to expression, whereas Derrida argues that expression is always contaminated by indication. *There is* always already contamination; the relation is here external to its terms. The relation *is in a sense* a passage, and as I have already intimated in my reading of Derrida above, the passage is “the nothing” or continuity between parallels.

Husserl attempts to support the presumption of the separability of expression and indication through two arguments, which Derrida sums up as follows:

⁵⁵ The original French title of this work by Derrida is *Le Voix et le Phenomene*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967); the translation could have retained the word voice from the French.

⁵⁶ ‘Non-presence’ is not to be understood as a negative absence (SP, 62 – 63) but as that which do not come in under correlative presence, that is, consciousness and evidence.

⁵⁷ A fuller discussion of Husserl and temporality I deem outside the scope of this thesis, but see *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, trans. J. S. Churchill. (London: Indiana University Press, 1964)

In interior discourse...I am indicating nothing to myself. I can at most imagine myself doing so; I can only represent myself as manifesting something to myself. This, however, is only *representation* and *imagination*.

In inward speech I communicate nothing to myself *because there is no need of it*. ...The self-communication of the self, could not take place because it would make no sense...because there would be *no finality* to it. The existence of mental [or psychic] acts does not have to be indicated (let us recall that in general only an existence can be indicated) because it is immediately present to the subject in the present moment (48).

Both arguments, according to Derrida, concern the status of representation in language, representation in the various senses one would encounter in dealing with Husserlian phenomenology. That includes representation as *Vorstellung*, the general sense of pure representation or ideality; and as *Vergegenwärtigung*, that is, 'repetition or reproduction of presentation', or as what replaces 'another *Vorstellung* (*Repräsentation*, *Repräsentant*)' (49). Derrida points out that the first argument seems to apply the "essential distinction", in terms of a "simple exteriority" between the real or factual and the ideality of representation to language (49). Derrida asks whether such distinctions may be applied to language, and proceeds to show that language would resist it:

There is every reason to believe that representation and reality are not merely added together in language [as suggested by Husserl's argument], for the simple reason that it is impossible in principle to rigorously distinguish them...Language in general – and language alone – *is* this (49-50).

For Derrida, the sign in general – signification – must be understood as an event: it is both iterability – a "formal identity" – and "necessarily always other" than this identity, that is, it escapes presence as *Vor-stellung*. There is a link between repetition and alterity, which Husserl's *Vor-stellung* as well as the other modifications of representation must miss. Representation as *Vorstellung* in Husserl refers only to expression and not

signification in general (50). This definition of signification in general – representation “is implied by any sign whatsoever” (50) – means that the distinction between representative and imaginary language is put in question. The sign in general is representational and accordingly there is a “wearing away” of the difference between reality and representation, simple presence and representation in “both expression and indicative communication” (51). Derrida questions the motive for the maintenance of a difference here. Here lies his main concern regarding signification and the metaphysics of phenomenology:

Does not the maintaining of this difference – in the history of metaphysics and for Husserl – answer to the desire to save presence and to reduce or derive the sign, and with it all powers of repetition? Which comes to living *in* the effect – the assured, consolidated, constituted effect of repetition and representation, of the difference which removes presence (51).

The elimination of the primordially of signification is what constitutes a philosophy based on intuition in presence; signification becomes derivative as constituted effect rather than real genesis. If “within the sign *the difference does not take place* between reality and representation, [that is] the gesture that confirms this difference is the very obliteration of the sign” (51), this means that what is suggested here is a concept of signification and representation thought outside the logic implied by *Vorstellung* and presence. Derrida’s claim is that “against Husserl’s express intention”, the *Vorstellung* itself, and as such, depends on the possibility of re-presentation (*Vergegenwärtigung*), [t]he presence of the present is derived from repetition and not the reverse” (52). The move made by phenomenology makes “the origin of presence and ideality steal itself away in the very presence and ideality that it makes possible” (55). What I mean by a ‘renewal’ of the concept of signification and representation, outside the logic of *Vorstellung* and presence, is that being is also informed by a signification, or the ‘invisible’ of the present-to-consciousness: the ‘in-presence’ of materiality in signs. This dynamism of a coming-into-presence, bound up with the materiality of signification, is not the constituted temporalisation of phenomenology’s view of cognition. Presence

understood as the correlation of radical intuition and pure form (53) “subordinates a reflection on the sign to a logic” (7). What Derrida points to, if signification is thought in terms of an ‘interweaving’ of indication and expression, is the possibility of seeing language outside this particular delimitation of language, which sees the essence of language – the sign – in terms of a use of language as logic and the presentation of truth (9). What is implied in this broader concept of language/sign is an indiscernibility of language and rational consciousness. If, following Derrida, there is always already contamination, then there is no pure expression and no pure presence-to-self; thus, the difference between consciousness and language on the phenomenological model is put in question. Derrida says that the distinction between expression and indication is “more functional than substantial”; it is not ontically conceived (20). It is the same problematic that is shown in case of the ‘anarchy of the noema’, and Derrida’s interpretation of the implications of the parallelism of transcendental phenomenology and phenomenological psychology. What Derrida’s critique of the phenomenological concept of the sign sets out to do is summed up as follows:

What is at issue is to make the original and non-empirical space of non-foundation appear over the irreducible void on the basis of which the security of presence in the metaphysical form of ideality is decided and raised up (7).

If the voice that hears itself seems to work as what preserves ideality and presence-to-self, Derrida’s comments on signification point to an other dimension of material significance which always already disturbs the idea of correlation of language and consciousness, as that of conscious thought and evidence.

The second of Husserl’s arguments as summarised by Derrida above states clearly that the idea of self-manifestation through indicative signification is useless considering the immediacy of self-presence or self-identity: “For the acts in question are themselves experienced by us at that very moment (*im selben Augenblick*)” (*Logical Investigations*, quoted in SP 49). This ‘actual now’ of presence is, according to Derrida, a reference

throughout Husserl's writings⁵⁸ to "evidence itself" and "absolute beginning" or *principium* (62). Derrida quotes from *Ideas I*, "the actual *now* is necessarily something punctual (*ein Punktuelles*) and remains so, *a form that persists through continuous change of matter*" (62); it is "the primal form of consciousness" (63). The 'actual now', as foundational in classical phenomenology, is what Derrida questions. According to the present work also the self-presence of the 'actual now' cannot be a 'beginning' or actual origin; it is a secondary abstraction, which bypasses a sensible considered prior to thought. It also bypasses any consideration of the dynamic of bodily being involved in any 'sense of self', as a genesis irreducible to the manifestations of constitutive consciousness. Self-manifestation refers to this *sense* of self, and thus refers to a bodily/affective or material dimension of cognition. According to the argument of classical phenomenology, there is no 'purpose' to the indicative sign regarding the manifestation of the self to the self, because the moment of presence-to-self does not contain alterity or difference; the identity of presence as self-presence "not only involves the enigma of a being appearing in absolute proximity to oneself, it also designates the temporal essence of this proximity – which does not dispel the enigma...the present of the self-present would be as indivisible as the blink of an eye" (59). Firstly, the notion of purposiveness betrays an all-pervasive intelligibility of thought reduced to phenomenology's intentional schema. Existence is, according to phenomenology, mainly *to be thought* in terms of a directedness of rational orientation. However, existence is more than thought and, as the present work argues, *primarily* or always already more than thought. Existence is first of all sensible being, and the affectations or material manifestations of the sensible in intelligible being cannot be accounted for through the rational constructions of intentional analysis and teleology. My contention is that the sensible of thought-being is always already its animation. Phenomenology's contention that there is no alterity involved in the actual now of self-presence, fails to recognise the sense in which material being is the irruption of difference into consciousness, the *making aware* of a sensible, which is other than and exceeds the intelligible contained in rational thought. The body/affectation – and material being *as such* – is its own

⁵⁸ Derrida discusses briefly the *Lectures on Inner Time Consciousness* (SP 61).

signification. The sensible exceeding the intelligible refers to the irruption into consciousness of materiality understood as non-conscious and non-present (to rational thought or intentional being). My engagement with Derrida's critique of classical phenomenology here is based in the opening he points to in terms of thinking a sensible which exceeds the intelligible. "Auto-affection", as Derrida describes the voice, can be thought as 'pure' according to the correlation of a formality of ideality and the radicality of intuition. This would be the sense of voice Derrida attributes to phenomenology, as the implication of voice and logos. However, what Derrida argues according to his notions of the 'trace' and 'difference', is that *there is a sense* in which voice is 'impure'. A sensible or affective Being exceeds Being as object-for-consciousness.

Derrida quotes *Ideas I*:

Every experience generally is an experience according to the mode of "being Present". It belongs to its very essence that it should be able to reflect upon that same essence in which it is necessarily characterised as being certain and present. (§ 3, quoted in SP 58).

Derrida points out that "within philosophy"⁵⁹ – as represented by classical phenomenology – the present-now is beyond objection, it defines the "very element of evidence and conscious or philosophical thought" (62). However, in questioning this privilege of presence-to-consciousness "we begin to get at the core of consciousness itself from a region that lies elsewhere than philosophy...[it is] a procedure that would remove every possible security and ground from discourse" (62). Derrida broaches this question through the concept of the sign and signification:

Signs would be foreign to this self-presence, which is the ground of presence in general. It is because signs are *foreign to* the self-presence of the living present that they may be [said to be]⁶⁰ *foreign to presence in general* in (what is currently

⁵⁹ Philosophy is for Derrida synonymous with 'philosophy of presence'.

styled) intuition or perception (58).

Signification exceeds the metaphysics of the idea as representation – *Vorstellung* (63). It exceeds the logic of the metaphysical contrast between form (idea) and matter “as a contrast between act and potency (“the actual now is necessarily something punctual and remains so, a form that persists through *continuous change of matter*”)” (*Ideas I*, § 81, quoted in SP 63). The problem of phenomenology, according to Derrida is this:

Phenomenology confronts every position centered on non-consciousness that can approach what is ultimately at stake: the concept of time. It is no accident that *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* both confirms the dominance of the present and rejects the “after-event” of the becoming-conscious of an “unconscious content” which is the structure of temporality implied throughout Freuds’s texts (63).

The sections of *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* quoted in Derrida’s *Speech and Phenomena*, show that retention, for Husserl, is a constitutive part of the present; it is furthermore determined as a ‘non-perception’ (63-65). According to Derrida, these two factors regarding time indicate that the present now is “*composed continually* with a non-presence and a non-perception” (64). Thus, the “*im selben Augenblick*”, understood as the indivisibility and identity of a pure presence or immediacy is undermined; it is undermined by a prior signification. It is this that Derrida refers to as the contamination of the phenomenon by the sign.

In section 17 of *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, Husserl seems to claim that perception and “its opposite” cannot be thought of in terms of a continuity: “if we call perception the act in which all ‘origination’ lies, which constitutes originally...then primary remembrance is perception...only in it is the past constituted, i.e not in a representative, but in a presentative way” (quoted in SP, 64). The notion of direct and immediate presentation in this statement in Husserl, disallows any notion of

⁶⁰ The quotation modifies the original. I have replaced Derrida’s ‘called’ with ‘said to be’, as the notion of signs being named foreign seems to go against the reality of their informing existence as material being, or a Being of materiality.

continuity – understood in terms of contamination – regarding retention and makes of the past a non-present as an unreal present. However, as Derrida points out, section 16 seems to imply precisely a certain continuity:

If we relate [this notion of] perception to the *differences of the givenness* with which temporal objects make their appearance, then the *antithesis of perception* is *primary remembrance*, which appears here, and *primary expectation* (retention and protention), whereby *perception and non-perception continually pass over into one another* (quoted in SP 65) .

Husserl seems to undermine his statement in section 17; with respect to a continuity or admittance of alterity – “non-presence and non-evidence *into the blink of the instant*” (65);

There is a *duration* of the blink of the eye, and it *closes the eye*. This alterity is even the *condition of presence*, of presentation and therefore of *Vorstellung* in general; it precedes all the dissociations which could be produced in presence, in *Vorstellung* (65, my emphases).

Without elaborating on all the issues relating to perception and time in Husserl, it is relevant for the argument of this work that there remains the problematic of the non-presence of a not-now. The insight, which paradoxically is premised on Husserl’s own theory of time, is of a constitutive alterity, an always already there of otherness and alterity in presence: “If ...we now consider the *constitutive phenomena*, we find a *flux*, and every phase of this flux is a *continuity of shading*” (quoted in SP 66). The argument concerning the exclusion of the indicative sign with respect to self-manifestation thus seems to be undermined in Husserl’s *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*.

I will return to the idea of a dynamic materiality in my discussion in chapter three of Gilles Deleuze’s critique of cognition and subjectivity, which resonates with many of the points raised here. For now, let me conclude by emphasising the importance of this

recognition, by Derrida, of an alterity 'within duration'; there is a heterogeneity of relation between non-perception or retention and perception, but importantly this heterogeneity is also conceived as a continuity. These notions of heterogeneity and continuity are what inform Derrida's notions of the trace and difference. These notions will also be elaborated in chapter two, and will underwrite the arguments made by Michel Henry for a material phenomenology.

The other point I would emphasise regarding Derrida's comment above, is that of alterity as a condition of presence, of presentation and *Vorstellung* in general. This insight raises the problem of a discrepancy between the phenomenological analysis and its object. It raises the problem of cognition and the paradox of transcendental determinations. Chapter two argues that the insights provided by Michel Henry's specific move out of classical phenomenology, and his problematisation of the issue of method as it has 'distorted' its object, come a long way towards solving this aporia of phenomenology.

Alterity, as conceived by Derrida in terms of a primary signification, involves the reinstatement of an origin more primordial than phenomenology's 'idea of' origin, a before of the "axiomatic *principium* of phenomenology itself" (66). Derrida's concepts of the 'trace' and *différance* refer to an alterity that *is there*, that conditions experience, including the experience of self-manifestation. This alterity may also be called a memory which informs every perception and presentation, and thus every manifestation. The concept of alterity questions the logic which underlies Husserl's argument concerning origins; when Husserl thematises the transcendental as heterogeneous to the world, he demonstrates, according to Derrida, a certain "disdain for language" that consists in a separation of speech and thought. When Husserl thematises indication as exterior to expression, when he isolates a 'pure expression', he shows a disregard for the reality of signification – that is, for the movement of *différance* that is brought about by the trace. On Derrida's view:

[Recognising] that the problem of the relationship [between retention and re-presentation] is none other than that of the history of "life" and of life's becoming conscious, we should be able to say *a priori* that their common root – the

possibility of re-petition in its most general form, that is, the constitution of a trace in the most universal sense – is a possibility which not only must inhabit the pure actuality of the now but must constitute it through the very movement of difference it introduces. Such a trace is – if we can employ this language without immediately contradicting it or crossing it out as we proceed – more “primordial” than what is phenomenologically primordial (67).

This alterity is thus always already a sort of outside of pure presence, in presentation as re-presentation. What is at stake for Derrida, in the notion of contamination, is precisely to show how the ontological differences made on the basis of phenomenological methodology, are ‘interwoven’. Contamination means that outside and inside are interwoven and not constituted by what constitutive consciousness intuits in reflection. As we have seen with regard to the noema and ideality, or what separates the relation from the ontic duplication of the Platonic idea, differentiation is based on a ‘primary’ interweaving. Derrida talks of a ‘certain outside’, an outside or alterity which is neither purely outside nor purely inside:

[In Husserl] meaning would isolate the concentrated purity of its *expressiveness* just at that moment when the relation to a certain outside is suspended (22).

This ‘outside’ brought into view by signification is what I intend by the notion of a sensible or sensibility which exceeds the intelligible. I read Derrida as referring to a sensible which interrupts and exceeds the intelligible when he claims at the end of *Speech and Phenomena* that “contrary to the assurance it [and phenomenology as always a phenomenology of perception] gives us... ‘the look’ [le regard, Blick] cannot ‘abide’ (104). The alterity which contaminates perception and presence to self, is described by Derrida as a “dialectic”:

Does not this “dialectic – in every sense of the term and before any speculative subsumption of this concept – open up living to difference [*différance*], and constitute, *in the pure immanence of the experience*, the divergence involved in

indicative communication and even significance in general...and signification in general, for Husserl not only intends to exclude signification from “solitary mental life”, he will consider language in general, the element of logos, in its expressive form itself, as a secondary event, *superadded* to a primordial and pre-expressive stratum of sense. Expressive language itself would be something supervenient upon the absolute silence of the self-relationship. (69, my emphases).

My emphases in this quotation point to the development from classical phenomenology that I am concerned with in the writings of Michel Henry. Henry’s essay “Material Phenomenology and Language, or Pathos and Language” (1999), is a critique of major tenets of classical phenomenology with regard to cognition. On my view, his theorising of a ‘pure phenomenality’ as the event ‘before’ the phenomenological or philosophical proposition provides insights akin to the kind of critique of cognition and the type of theorising Gilles Deleuze also engages in. On a similar logic to that of the Deleuzian ‘plane of immanence’, he emphasises the idea of the phenomenon’s possibility as it resides in a primary affectation of self and the idea of pathos as the effectuation of the phenomenon and language. The point for Deleuze – and Henry – is that the dichotomies of thought, such as the idea of presence based in a prior absence, an inside constituted in ‘relation to’ an isolated outside, and a self on the premise of an other, are structures which cannot account for the emergence of the real or the relation of language and phenomena. According to Deleuze, these cannot sufficiently theorise a sense of continuity and connection *across* the diverse areas of cognition, gesture, pathos and affectivity.

What Derrida argues in *Speech and Phenomena* is that there can be no real separation of perception and the sign, silence and voice; contamination means that there is an interweaving between these (15; 60). When Derrida develops what he terms the ‘ultra-transcendental’ concept of life, it refers to a recognition that according to contamination – the logic that lies below Husserl’s ambiguous thematisations of retention – there is what is “refractory to any category [of philosophy as metaphysics]” (13). This ‘life’ is

'inexpressible' because, according to Derrida, language is equivocal and metaphorical, "analogy through and through" (13). Derrida's ultra-transcendental concept of life is conceived as a development of Husserl's notions of parallels: it is conceived as heterogeneous and external to the world, but at the same time implies a sameness, which is not identity, between transcendental and empirical life. The 'heterogeneity' is what makes possible the transcendental notion of "explication", that is, the possibility of language being "deployed freely within truth" (12).

Henry, in a move that is similar to the one made by Deleuze, as a critique of philosophy's portents to 'truth', reverses the sense of 'a phenomenology of language'. On Henry's view, "language belongs to the internal conditions of [phenomenology's] process of elucidation" (Henry, 1999). Henry's proposition regarding a pure phenomenality, as the question bypassed in classical phenomenology, is that of phenomenality as an internal condition of both phenomenon and language. Henry's point is similar to Derrida's when the latter claims, in *Speech and Phenomena*, that "language guards the difference which guards language" (14) and that what is heterogeneous to language is always already "archived" there (15). In order to "point the finger at the *invisible*" (23) – this is indication – language must be seen to produce the very difference with the exterior or truth, which makes language possible. What is suggested is that what is heterogeneous to language is always already in language. Ultimately, there is *no sense* in the idea of an expressive language 'super-added' to a pre-expressive and primordial stratum of sense. Derrida's concept of signification – in terms of the movement of *différance* introduced by the trace – shows the aporia that sustains such separation.

Chapter Two

Language and Embodiment

I. The Intentional Problematic

The reception of Husserl in the French tradition that I focus on, criticises classical phenomenology for its adherence to the primacy of intentionality, specifically what Fink, in his *Kantstudien* essay terms act-intentionality. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the problematic is precisely that of the ultimate referral back of any phenomenon to its constitution by an intentional agency. His later works, particularly *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968) take up the question of this primacy of intentional consciousness as the basis for classical phenomenological analysis.

“The whole Husserlian analysis is blocked by the framework of *acts* which imposes upon it the philosophy of consciousness”¹. *The Visible and the Invisible* is a critique of classical phenomenology as a ‘philosophy of consciousness’. It is a critique of Husserlian intellectualist phenomenology and its imbrication of the relation of rational consciousness and world. Ultimately it calls into question the notion of intentionality, and ‘intentional analysis’ insofar as it shows phenomenology to be dominated by the relation of rational adequation. However, *The Visible and the Invisible* as well as the essay “The Philosopher and His Shadow”², show that Merleau-Ponty does not renounce

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 244. References to this text will be marked VI.

² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Philosopher and His Shadow” in *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964)

intentionality as such, but wishes to resuscitate an “unthought thought” of the late Husserl: a *latent* or ‘*fungierende*’ intentionality of Being rather than consciousness.

Merleau-Ponty’s late thought involves a reconsideration of ontology, dissociated from the appropriative tenets of Husserlian phenomenology, which emphasises the logical analysis of the directedness of consciousness and the doctrine of essential adequation and apodictic evidence. Against Husserl’s attempt at a sustained separation between, on the one hand an empirical/psychological analysis of subjectivity and, on the other, a transcendental one, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is based on the insight that the transcendental-logical and the empirical-factual are interrelated. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology attempts to open up, in a Heideggerian vein, the question of being³.

Merleau-Ponty’s critique of what Derrida designates as ‘metaphysics of presence’ begins with the reinsertion of embodied subjectivity in being, recognising, as does Heidegger and Derrida, that the ‘metaphysics of presence’ leaves Being beyond question. To the extent that the Husserlian ‘now’ of pure presence is determined according to the ‘visibility’ afforded by a transcendental point of view, its ‘origin’ remains within the provisions of constitutional logic. Thus the phenomenological beginning, in its search for the origins of meaning in constitutive subjectivity, prompts a reorientation in the thought of Merleau-Ponty, as well as Derrida, with respect to the meaning of being. In response to the impasse of the separation of empirical contingency according to the reductions by transcendental logic, Merleau-Ponty proposes a reopening of the question of being in terms of a ‘perceptual logic’; the reorientation is a departure from Husserlian phenomenology to the extent that it removes the theme of the ‘now’ from its relation to the standpoint of transcendental subjectivity⁴. Merleau-Ponty’s attempt to open up (an)

³ However, Merleau-Ponty’s opening up of the question of being is based on what he terms a ‘perceptual logic’, which takes the analysis beyond Heideggerian being- in-the-world. The specific imbrication of subjectivity and Being/being in Merleau-Ponty, will be further clarified.

⁴ In the previous chapter I pointed out the ways in which Derrida finds in Husserl’s *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* the recognition in paragraph 16 that the ‘now’ is never fully present. See chapter one of this thesis, p. 24 and 25. See also Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, trans. J. S. Churchill (London: Indiana University Press, 1964) section 16 and 17. Derrida

ontology within the phenomenological parameters of a latent or operative intentionality, shifts the focus to embodiment, as a 'dimensionality' in being which resists constitutional analysis according to a transcendental viewpoint:

[It is thus] not compatible with 'phenomenology,' that is, with an ontology that obliges whatever is not nothing to *present* itself to the *consciousness* across *Abschattungen* and as deriving from an originating donation which is an *act*, i.e. one *Erlebnis* among others (VI 244).

The passage above is taken from the *Working Notes* following the main text of the unfinished *Visible and Invisible*, under the heading "Indestructible past, and intentional analytic – and ontology", from April 1960. Merleau-Ponty presents here the idea of a 'past that has never been present'. He criticises the presumption of simultaneity in the Husserlian conception of intentional analysis, the supposed transparency of the 'now' as a source of a time given according to a logic of serialisation:

the idea of time as a 'series of *Erlebnisse*'. There is [in Husserl] an architectonic past. [...] What is the *intentional analysis* worth in regard to it? It gives us: every past *sinngemäß* has been present, i.e. its past being has been founded in presence—And certainly, that is so true [of?] it that it is *still present* (243).

It is here that Merleau-Ponty points to that which, he argues, eludes the 'intentional analytic'. He thereby criticises the Husserlian idea of 'simultaneity', "which is meta-intentional (cf. Fink article on the *Nachlass*)" (243):

The intentional analytic assumes a place of absolute contemplation *from which* the intentional explicitation is made, and which could embrace present, past, and even openness toward the future – [Against the Husserlian *Ablaufsphänomen* which contains 'simultaneity', what eludes the intentional analytic] ... is the order

points out that Husserl in section 16 admits to a "non-presence and non-evidence into the blink of the instant" (SP 65).

of the “consciousness” of significations, and in this order there is no past-present “simultaneity,” there is the evidence of their *divergence* (243, my emphasis).

Merleau-Ponty suggests here that there is a relatively anonymous operative intentionality of Being, which in Husserl remains inadequately accounted for as it precisely eludes phenomenological thematism; it eludes reduction to the “‘perspectives’ of the ‘consciousness’” (243). The passage above puts the term consciousness in inverted commas; the order of awareness of ‘significations’ is something other than the Husserlian cognitive consciousness understood as a (cor-) relation of determination or denomination. The various forms of operative intentionality are in Husserl⁵ understood in terms of a constitution of sense with respect to the world subjected to phenomenological reflection. Operative intentionalities are not conceived as acts of cognition, but are nevertheless conceived in terms of a submission to the reflection of rational consciousness as the ultimate ordering sense-bestowing principle of the Husserlian ‘lifeworld’. What Merleau-Ponty attempts to work out of Husserl’s intentionality *of the reduction* is a perceptual logos or teleology of Being, rather than consciousness. However, Merleau-Ponty retains the notion of operative intentionality; the performative constitution survives his critique of Husserl’s idealism. Dispensing with the act of noesis, sense-giving is now performed by the body, or the *intertwining* of a world-body, conceived in terms of the body’s movement and a more general dynamic of Being.

The value of the ‘noema’ for Derrida, as the irreal correlate of consciousness, is ‘lost’ in Merleau-Ponty’s ontology. The correlation or reciprocity, which in Merleau-Ponty is primarily understood in ontological terms, rather than by methodological ‘transfer’ or projection, is refigured in terms of a prior ‘unity’ of Being and being. The point for Merleau-Ponty is to secure a transcendence of Being as world, in a relation of priority with respect to transcendental consciousness. There is, for Merleau-Ponty a *lived* world always already there, a *unity* of B/being before its positing by knowledge through an act

⁵ See the works after *Ideas I*, especially *Ideas II*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989) and *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) for an elaboration of Husserl’s notion of the *lifeworld*.

of conscious 'identification'. However, in order to secure this transcendence, and a certain *opacity* of the world with respect to idealist and rational logic and the reduction of subjectivity to the transparency of consciousness, the displacement to the body is further grounded in a rather problematic 'dimensionality' of body-world unity. Merleau-Ponty refers to this as "indirect ontology": "My 'indirect' method (being in the beings) is alone conformed with being – 'negative philosophy' like negative theology'"⁶.

The parallel with Derrida's project here is evident in the concern with conjectures that mark the aporias of classical assumptions of cognitive transparency, such as Husserl's self-identical structure of correlation between cognising and cognised. Merleau-Ponty's 'indirect ontology' raises the question of ontological dualisms; the oppositional concepts regarding cognition and perception according to classical phenomenology are rewritten through conjectures "for which classical philosophy has no name" (VI 141). Merleau-Ponty works with a figurative language to indicate a dimensionality bypassed in phenomenological concepts. When Merleau-Ponty argues against his statements in earlier works (where he still works with the "consciousness-object distinction as starting point for analysis")⁷, that "the tacit cogito is impossible" (WN 171), this highlights two main points of his late thought. The first is that his late philosophy recognises a connection between thought and language, which accounts for the linguistic constitution of the 'tacit cogito'. The second insight is that there is, on the other hand, "a world of silence, the perceived world... an order where there are non-language significations, but they are accordingly positive. There is for example no absolute flux of *Erlebnisse*; there are fields and a field of fields, with a *style* and a typicality" (171). Merleau-Ponty designates *flesh* as "this interiorly worked over mass, [which] has no name in any philosophy" and further 'aesthetisises' ontology noting: "We must not think the flesh as starting from substances,

⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Working Notes*, following the *Visible and Invisible*, p. 179. Hereafter WN.

⁷ Merleau-Ponty states in the *Visible and the Invisible*: "The problems in *Ph.P* are insoluble because I start there from the consciousness-object distinction" (VI 253). In the *Visible and the Invisible* the subject is no longer conceived as an embodied *consciousness*, and the body is not the mediator for a being-in-the-world. Instead, the late work conceives "the sensible world as this perceptual logic, this system of equivalences... And this logic is neither *produced* by our psychophysical constitution, nor produced by our categorical equipment, but lifted from a *world* whose inner framework our categories, our constitution, our 'subjectivity' render explicit" (247-8).

from body and spirit – for then it would be the union of contradictories – but we must think it...as an *element*, as the *concrete emblem* of a *general manner of being*” (147, my emphasis).

What is clear in these statements is a concern with the very processes of the emergence of meaning rooted in a notion of embodiment. However, what is also clear is that Merleau-Ponty’s displacement of intentionality dispenses with the dimension of signification afforded by the concept of the ‘noema’ for a neutralisation of the difference between the lived body and the world. Meaningfulness or Being is considered in Merleau-Ponty in terms of an ontological continuity, which is nevertheless an *écart*⁸ or distance, what is characterised as the specific logic of perceptual being: “But this divergence is not a void, it is filled precisely by the flesh as the place of emergence of a vision, a passivity that bears an activity--” (WN 272). What is highlighted by Merleau-Ponty’s ontology is a dynamism referring to an affective dimension of Being, which is not reducible to the grasp of the *eidos* of Husserlian phenomenology, and furthermore dispenses with the possibility of an ontological void, the notion of a self-presence based in absence. Merleau-Ponty refutes the purity of self-present consciousness. The valuable element of Merleau-Ponty’s reworking of Husserl’s operative intentionality is the opening to what he terms the invisible in the visible, or the in-visible: the very disruption of Cartesian- and Husserlian schematism of a transparency of position towards origin. “The invisible” refers to such disruption to the extent that, according to Merleau-Ponty, it is “what, relative to the visible, could nevertheless not be seen as a thing ([but] the existentials of the visible, its dimensions, its non-figurative inner framework)” (257).

Merleau-Ponty teams the notion of Being as body-world with the notion of ‘silent speech’: he proposes that symbolic expression – or thought – as well as creative expression, “continues an effort of articulation which is the Being of every being” (168). The title of the essay “Indirect Speech and the Voices of Silence” (1964) shows the concern with a dimension of Being ‘anterior to’ consciousness. The idea of silent and

⁸ *Écart* translates as separation and distance.

indirect speech refers to a notion of Being as teleology and transcendence. That is, there is for Merleau-Ponty in B/being an intentional instance, a material source of transcendence and directedness. This directedness or source of transcendence is other than consciousness: “It is Being that speaks within us and not we who speak of Being” (VI 214). Merleau-Ponty ultimately refers consciousness and subjectivity to the dimension of Being, as a ‘source’: an energy or force, which informs consciousness ‘from below’. In the language of the discourse of psychoanalysis, there is ‘unconscious before conscious manifestation’. Merleau-Ponty’s ‘in-visible’ refers to a Being or teleology, which imposes manifestation, becoming-conscious, coming to presence and articulation⁹. Teleology here refers to a certain directedness of the materiality of our being, a corpo-real, as always already informing any manifestation, whether of subject or object. This corpo-real is that which, according to Derrida, can never be presented, but nevertheless marks any presence as the conditions of presence. Such condition(ing) is better described as affectivity. Affectivity refers to the meaning of the materiality of human being or subjectivity. In a move which recalls Heidegger, man or subjectivity becomes in Merleau-Ponty’s ontology the realisation of Being. The “order of the ‘consciousness’ of significations”, in which “there is no past-present ‘simultaneity’, there is the evidence of their divergence—” (243), is the reference in Merleau-Ponty to a “*reciprocal* intentional reference, which marks the limit of the intentional analytic” (244), as

the point where it becomes a philosophy of transcendence. [However] we encounter this *ineinander* each time the intentional reference is no longer that

⁹ Merleau-Ponty’s critique of intellectualism attempts through this attribution of teleology to Being to put in question the notion of intentional constitution as pertaining to consciousness. Michel Henry interprets Merleau-Ponty as enabling a re-elevation of Being in its excess to reason and consciousness, and interprets his thought on the body – “the body unites us directly with things through its own ontogenesis” – as doing so by a notion of unconscious constitution. Henry also attributes this notion to Schelling and speaks of immanence as the Night, an invisible by which the visible is constituted. For Henry, who would take account of the non-conscious, but doesn’t speak of the unconscious with regard to his own ‘phenomenology of the invisible’ or ‘revelation’, would use the word ‘conditioned’ rather than ‘constituted’. See Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973) pp. 395-96.

from a *Sinngebung* to a *Sinngebung* that *motivates* it but from a “noema” to a “noema” (244).

For Merleau-Ponty, as well as for Derrida, the significance of the noema is the power of signification according to its non-belonging to the ‘contents’ of consciousness: what Derrida describes as the “anarchy of the noema”¹⁰. The noema represents a force of signification which eludes – because always in excess of – determination and motivation by the perspectives of consciousness. In Derrida the noema is the anarchic instance, a signification, which refutes the primacy of act-intentionality and thus the phenomenology of primordial ‘presence’. For Merleau-Ponty the noema is the element or ‘elemental’ – and no longer an irreal instance – and refutes the primacy of act-intentionality while, however, referring to the primacy of Being as “flesh”:

Here it is indeed the past that adheres to the present and not the *consciousness* of the past that adheres to the *consciousness* of the present: the “vertical” past contains in itself the exigency to have been perceived, far from the consciousness of having perceived bearing that of the past. The past is no longer here a “modification” or modalisation of the *Bewusstsein von*... Conversely it is the *Bewusstsein von*, the having perceived that is born of massive Being. I have perceived it *since it was*.... It is necessary to take up again and develop the *fungierende or latent intentionality* which is the intentionality within being... It is necessary to take as primary, not the consciousness and its *Ablaufphänomen* with its distinct intentional threads, but the vortex which this *Ablaufphänomen* schematizes, the spatialising-temporalising vortex (which is flesh and not consciousness facing a noema) (244).

Merleau-Ponty’s latent or operative intentionality refers to a ‘reversibility’ in, or of, B/being. Beyond any simple direction of consciousness towards world or noema there is,

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, “‘Genesis and Structure’ and Phenomenology” in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) p. 163

as he argues in the *Visible and Invisible*, an “intentional reference which is not only from the past [“subordinated”] to the factual, empirical present, but also and inversely from the factual present to a dimensional present or *Welt* or Being, where the past is “simultaneous” with the present in the narrow sense” (244). The word ‘simultaneous’ is put in brackets. Like Derrida Merleau-Ponty is concerned to expose the ‘illusion’ of a pure presence in terms of a ‘consciousness facing a noema’:

Husserl’s error is to have described the interlocking [of pasts, through the retention] starting from a *Präsensfeld* considered as without thickness, as immanent consciousness. [What is lost here is] the time of the body, taximeter time of the corporeal schema (173).

(a) Considerations of Materiality and Human Embodiment

When Merleau-Ponty claims that “I am my body”, and that as embodied subjectivity I am “a field of Being” (240), what he means is that human being is in itself openness toward Being¹¹. Contrary to the late Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty sees man – *the* human being – as the ultimate reference point, but ‘man’ is here a refractory category of the specific imbrication of Being/being that he terms *flesh*. That is to say that there would be no time or space independent of me, as *my body*, but this body is reducible to the flesh of the world-body. Time and space are not given meaning “conceived as a series of events in themselves” (205), as a serialisation grasped by immanent consciousness. Merleau-Ponty criticises Husserl’s identification of a fundamental serial constitution with time-consciousness¹².

¹¹ Merleau-Ponty states in *The Visible and the Invisible* that the unconscious is to be understood as “articulations of our field”, the unconscious is unconscious “by the fact that it is not an *object*, but it is that through which objects are possible... It is the *Urgemeinschaftung* of our intentional life, the [intemporal] *Ineinander* of the others in us and us in them [...]” (180).

Against Husserl's focus on the transcendental ego's powers of constitution, and the seriality of time-consciousness as the condition of subjectivity's experience, Merleau-Ponty argues that bodily subjectivity is Being insofar as it is considered an event of time, a momentary or transitory articulation of a transcendence. Merleau-Ponty's equation of the bodily subject with "the very conception of perceptual being and *Offenheit*" (186), posits a transcendence of Being, which is to say that "there is" something that escapes the kind of linearity from which Husserlian noesis is abstracted. According to the *Visible and the Invisible* it is a "non-knowing of the beginning which is not nothing, and which is not reflective truth either, and which also must be accounted for" (VI 49). The focus of Merleau-Ponty's late thought regarding phenomenality and ontology is the question of what conditions knowledge. For Merleau-Ponty, the reduction involves something other than the turn by idealism to pure consciousness¹³. The conjectures of the phenomenal world, according to Merleau-Ponty's ontological move, make of the ontological dualism evident in the terms subjective and objective, secondary differentiations. According to this view perception, like comprehension, is not a matter of "[constitution] in intellectual immanence... but [*apprehension*] by *coexistence*" (188, my emphasis). In fact, perception as a 'there is', or an Opening of Being, is not to be understood as a function of an act of consciousness, but in terms of a *chiasm* or 'intertwining': *flesh*. The notion of intertwining attempts to name that which Husserl fails to adequately theorise by the notion of horizon' which, if we "take the word strictly" (148), is irreducible to a plane of pure visibility or generality. Merleau-Ponty's development of horizon as intertwining refers to an excess of *sensible* being. The notion gestures toward a disruption of the intentional prejudice of the visible for consciousness by the world as flesh, and of the abstraction of vision by a materiality of *my* bodily being. This 'chiasm' makes up the ontological foundation for the *emergence* of visibility, as *conditioned by embodiment*. A sensible is thus always in excess of the grasp of consciousness. Flesh, as the "element" of being, is thought of in terms of a non-figurative 'intertwining', not as a pure givenness to

¹² See especially Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W.R. Gibson (New York: Macmillan, 1931), § 81 and *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*.

¹³ This is stated already in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1962) ix.

consciousness. According to Merleau-Ponty, “the body and the distances participate in the same corporeality and visibility in general, which reigns between them and it, and even beyond the horizon...” (149). A latency of Being, which Merleau-Ponty terms the flesh, is the in-visible: a *condition of* visibility and manifestation.

Husserl’s intentionality of logical internal time-consciousness is countered by Merleau-Ponty’s notion of an operative intentionality of Being, which passes through the materiality of bodily being. The significance afforded by the passage through materiality is, in Merleau-Ponty, not reducible to a conception of the body as a connecting link between transparent consciousness – conceived as an absolute – and the world.

In *Ideas 1*, Husserl emphasises the connection between the hyletic stratum – that is, impressional matter – and the body¹⁴. However, according to § 53 of *Ideas 1*, the connection to the body is bracketed by the location of the ‘hyle’ as a real component of transparent consciousness rather than located according to a bodily intentional reference. Husserl’s writings after *Ideas 1* represent some advance towards a more adequate phenomenology of the body. Merleau-Ponty picks up the problematic with his development of the Husserlian concept of operative intentionality.

The opening up of the question of ontology in the *Visible and the Invisible* refers to the postulation of an intentional reference left unaccounted for by Husserl’s retentive intentionality. Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the ‘metaphysics of presence’ argues that the directedness and two-dimensionality of the intentional prejudice leaves out an *originary* dimension of bodily being; the opening up of the question of being in Merleau-Ponty is a reorientation in thought with regard to its beginnings. In the *Visible and Invisible*, the *concept* of body attains further dimensionality as bound up with the ‘verticality’ termed flesh. The body as flesh is determined by reversibility or *écart*, that is, the ‘spatialising-temporalising vortex’ of Being. The problem with Husserl’s abstraction into serialised temporality is, according to Merleau-Ponty, that it cannot take account of the effects of “the ‘contents’ on time, which passes ‘more quickly’ or ‘less quickly’, of *Zeitmaterie* on

¹⁴ See Edmund Husserl, *Ideas 1*, § 53.

Zeitform" (184). Merleau-Ponty poses here the question of a temporality necessarily elusive with regard to reflective consciousness, "time as chiasm" (266), constitutive of itself, "always seen from the point of view of someone who *is of it*" (184). Merleau-Ponty suggests a disruption of linear, serial temporality that attests to a dimensionality prior to noesis: thus a disruption of the notion of a purely self-present consciousness. The "time of the body" raises the question of the 'unconscious' or a materiality which informs consciousness as sensible Being. The differentiation of sensing-sensible is a derivation from an original undivided Being, the '*flesh* of the world'. While Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh is problematic on account of the figurative generality it proposes with regard to subjectivity and B/being¹⁵, it does note a dimensionality of sensible Being which is lost in the analyses of classical phenomenology. While Being is considered 'undivided', it comprises an unlimited *source of transcendence*. Merleau-Ponty formulates this source of transcendence as the anteriority of a past that is not only retained by a subjectivity but, reversibly, effects that subjectivity, as "pre-noesis". Husserl's schematism of the transparency of 'pure' consciousness versus retention and act is broken up to a greater degree than in Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'sedimentation' – as the past, the 'unconscious', and language.

Merleau-Ponty's conception of intentionality is bound up with this emphasis on the priority – in both senses – of the perceptual world and the temporality of the body. According to these terms the conception is a departure from Husserl's brief considerations of 'operative intentionality'. Although Fink, in his note to Husserl's late

¹⁵ Against Heidegger's emphasis on Being over beings, Merleau-Ponty's notion of the in-visible is a sort of mixture of Husserlian experience according to the former's development of the notion of operative intentionality and the Bergsonian notion of *élan vital*. *Life*, for Merleau-Ponty, refers to the notion of Being/being in a problematic imbrication. Knowing and known are considered absolutely linked. However, the importance of his development of the Heideggerian problematic of B/being and the question of being is his emphasis on a corpo-real. To this extent the imbrication of knowing and known can be understood in terms of a meaning pertaining to the materiality of human being, a meaningful relation of body to sensible being as such. In *The Visible and the Invisible* he describes the "Being of this being" as precisely this: "the invisible of this world, that which inhabits it, and renders it visible, its own and interior possibility" (151). Regarding the relation to Husserlian phenomenology Merleau-Ponty, in opposition to Husserl, considers the 'contamination' of the pre-philosophical and philosophical 'attitudes' as what the phenomenological reduction bears witness to *positively* speaking. As Levinas, as well as Heidegger, point out, the so-called transcendental position (of philosophy) cannot be based on the notion of a prior theoretical position as the originary starting point.

Crisis of European Sciences, suggests that the various forms of intentionality – that is, beyond psychological intentionality and the noetic-noematic correlation – are in fact what breaks the appearance of immediate self-presence of consciousness to itself¹⁶, Husserl's phenomenology nevertheless does not really investigate the dimension of opacity which marks factual embodied subjectivity. Despite Husserl's late investigations into 'passive synthesis', any broaching of pre-reflective or pre-noetic experience would have to abort in face of the capacity of transcendental reflection to fixate experience. The anteriority of this experience would be subsumed under the abstraction of a rational time-space schema. Merleau-Ponty argues that the reflective act refers to identification in terms of disengagement:

[...] from the things, perception, world and the perception of the world, by *submitting them to a systematic variation*, the intelligible nuclei that resist, and to proceed from one intelligible nucleus to the next in a way that is not belied by experience but gives us only its universal contours (VI 46, my emphasis).

The Husserlian effort to fix experience according to "essential invariants" (46) must, according to Merleau-Ponty, miss a transcendence of Being not reducible to what is determined as the truth of eidetic reflection. The insight that informs Merleau-Ponty's critique on this point is that of the impossibility of the full present, as something *in itself*. For Merleau-Ponty the temporal 'now' is an abstraction from real time or the time of the body, which does not have any fullness of meaning in any sense other than its inscription within relations of relative difference. Merleau-Ponty uses the term *chiasm* for the "figurative simultaneity" of "the presence and latency behind each of all the others [the 'nows']" (113): the meaning of the latency of operative intentionality is that of sedimentation of 'temporal contents'; the in-visible of pre-reflective experience. This 'content of form' refers to that *element* of Being which Husserlian phenomenology cannot theorise; it is the 'unconscious before conscious manifestation', in which there is not yet the fixation by the gaze of "a serial space and time nor the pure idea of series, but

¹⁶ Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Find again details. See also Eugen Fink's 1933 essay on Husserl, as discussed in the previous chapter.

... a time and a space that exist by piling up, by proliferation, by encroachment..." (115). Merleau-Ponty wishes to point out, if not to pinpoint, a dimensionality of experience irreducible to Husserlian logic.

Merleau-Ponty's critique of the Husserlian sense of horizon is close to the terms of Levinas's critique in *Totality and Infinity* (1969). Levinas's critique, like Merleau-Ponty's, concerns the extent to which the Husserlian notion of intentionality remains bound up with reflexivity according to the directedness of consciousness (VI 148-49). On Levinas's estimation also, the Husserlian analysis of intentionality does not adequately account for the emergence of Being in being:

The notion held under the direct gaze of the thought that defines it nevertheless reveals itself implanted, unbeknownst to this naïve thought, in horizons unsuspected by this thought. These horizons endow it with meaning – such is the essential teaching of Husserl. What does it matter if in Husserlian phenomenology taken to the letter these unsuspected horizons are in their turn interpreted as thoughts intending objects ...¹⁷

The objective for Levinas as well as for Merleau-Ponty lies with a necessary excess with respect to the intentional delimitation by consciousness. Unlike Husserl's reduction of the emergence of meaning to the workings of "inner consciousness" or the representational intentionality of a transcendental ego Levinas, as well as Merleau-Ponty, emphasise a dimension irreducible even to the division between reflexive and pre-reflexive: an undifferentiable emergence irreducible to consciousness. Merleau-Ponty states: "Reflexivity must be understood by the body, by the relation to self of the body...The I, really, is nobody, is the anonymous; it must be so, prior to all objectification, in order to be the Operator, or the one to whom all this occurs...the named I, the I named (*Le Je dénommé, le dénommé Je*), is an object. The primary I, of which this one is the objectification, is the unknown *to whom* everything appeals, before whom...there is

¹⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Duquesne University Press, 1969) p. 28.

something. It is therefore negativity" (WN 246). Both refer to a depth of Being, an invisible irreducible to the main tenets of phenomenology's act-intentionality and the manifestation of the object in eidetic reflection. The turn by classical phenomenology to 'the things themselves' as a turn to the positivity of evidence, necessarily misses the origin of signification, which is inseparable from the sensible, affective dimension of embodied subjectivity. Although Levinas, like Merleau-Ponty, thus theorises a sort of phenomenology of the in-visible, Levinas does not consider the invisible or the non-apparent¹⁸ in terms of the radical continuity expressed in Merleau-Ponty's 'flesh of the world'. For Levinas, the origin of signification is thought in terms of the responsiveness and responsibility to an absolutely Other (*Autrui*). The basis for any origin of signification is therefore a 'non-figural' absolute Difference.

In anticipation of the next section, which treats the relation between Merleau-Ponty and Derrida with regard to the notion of *écart*, I want to comment on Derrida's thought on the origin of signification in his *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*¹⁹. In the *Introduction*, Derrida takes up the question of sense or *sens* (meaning), over and against that of essence in philosophy. Language and the question of difference come to the forefront for Derrida with respect to thinking genesis. Following Fink's assertion of genesis as *the* problem or motivation of phenomenology, Derrida's discussion of phenomenology and genesis with regard to Husserl's *Crisis* and *Origin of Geometry* is concerned to demonstrate "the primordial *Difference* of the absolute Origin" (IOG 153, my emphasis). Derrida starts with separation, or "impure" difference, what is designated by *Différance*. In "Violence and Metaphysics" he makes the point that "[p]ure difference is not absolutely different (from nondifference). Hegel's critique of the concept of pure difference is for us here, doubtless, the most uncircumventable theme. Hegel thought absolute difference, and showed that it can be pure only by being impure"²⁰. As I showed

¹⁸ It is precisely this dimension of phenomenality, which is the concern of Michel Henry's work on self-manifestation.

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, trans. John P. Leavey (New York: Nicolas Hays, Ltd. 1978). Hereafter referred to as IOG.

in chapter one, with respect to *Speech and Phenomena* especially, the notion of contamination is at the root of Derrida's thought of difference/différance. The originary *différance* refers to what Derrida in paragraph 7 calls a "subjectless transcendental field" (IOG 88), the originary separation which he understands as life's self-distributions, what he comes to call *l'écriture* in his later works, and which is productive of subjectivity and self-awareness. The point he makes is that genesis must be understood in terms of an originary contamination. Derrida stresses the manner in which the self-presence of intuitive consciousness is always already informed, so to speak, by a separation and 'dialectic' irreducible to contradiction.

While the *Introduction* recognises that for Husserl the origin of geometry or the "unique historicity of the ideal object" (IOG 44) includes receptivity with regard to intuition²¹, it is nevertheless production in the sense of constitution²² according to the abstraction of the pure 'now'. A geometrical objectivity constituted as ideality comes to existence through an "experience" and signifies *as such in this experience* or reduction.

Derrida states towards the end of the *Introduction* that "the absolute is passage" (149), and refers to the separation in which other remains other, not absorbed into the same or the unity of self-presence by synthesis. Derrida's argument in the *Introduction* is that thought calls for a re-conception of the transcendental as "a certain outside" which disrupts and engages the intuition of self-presence. As I discussed in chapter one, Derrida points to this necessity of a certain outside in Husserl's own writing on temporality, alterity and inter-subjectivity. Derrida expresses Levinas's influence on this point, later in "Violence and Metaphysics": the latter's recognition of a 'second Husserl' other than the Husserl of 'presence'.

When Derrida comments on Husserl's orientation in *The Origin of Geometry* as *Rückfrage* – translated as 'return inquiry' – he points out that "[R]ückfrage... is asked on

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics", in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978) p. 320, n91.

²¹ See chapter one and recall Husserl on passive synthesis.

²² See the *Introduction*, p. 40. Derrida uses the word production translating Husserl's *Leistung*.

the basis of a first posting. From a received and *already* readable document, the possibility is offered me of asking again, and *in return*, about the originary and final intention of what has been given to me by tradition" (50). This means that there is an originary contamination by history or a *sens/ible*²³ that always already informs reduction and methodological origin. "There must always already have been a fact of a history of geometry, so that the reduction can be performed. I must already have a naïve knowledge of geometry and must not *begin* at its origin. Here the method's juridical certainty overrides the factual necessity of history" (38). Derrida wishes here to assert a necessary delay with respect to the question of genesis and ideal objectivity, and relates it to what he calls a *tendrilllic movement* (33); that is, the notion of contamination is understood according to 'dialectic' without synthesis. There is a given and a receptivity that cannot be understood in terms of Husserlian phenomenology's "given [that is, intuited] as an object", "before us and for us" (83).

Contamination has always already happened according to such a dialectic.

According to Derrida, Husserl's notion of objective ideality and his privileging of the mathematical object are problematical because of the manner in which they are bound up with a notion of a pure or transcendental language, that is, the reduction of language to a logic. Derrida asserts that for Husserl "the model of language is the objective language of science" (82). This is language according to the notion that across culture and tradition, 'translation in principle is an always possible task' because "language, tradition and history exist only insofar as objects break the surface" (82). Derrida's assertion is that it is impossible to speak of the object without passing through culture, as history and temporality²⁴. The factuality of the latter always already informs the ideality of the

²³ By *sens/ible* I wish to convey, in addition to the double meaning of *sens* as "sense" and "direction", a sensible referring to an affective dimension or positioning with regard to sense.

²⁴ In chapter 7 of *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida comments on the 'impotence' of the 'language of consciousness' or univocal language. As much as consciousness cannot be maintained as the purity of the living present, language cannot be maintained in univocity. Language must be equivocal (IOG 102). However, in order to make sense *for consciousness* language must nevertheless be univocal. Thus it is the notion of necessary impossibility with respect to language. As a phenomenological absolute, the living present cannot be exited (136). Nevertheless, the notion of impotence implies that consciousness is the very movement that strives to move beyond its limits. The impotence with respect to the maintenance of the

object. The privilege by Husserl of the mathematical object as the ideality of a *Vorstellung* – that which is what it appears to be for intuitive consciousness – informs Derrida's critical approach to 'presence' and the sense of being as presence or phenomenon for a 'pure consciousness' in *Speech and Phenomena*²⁵. Within the determination of being as presence, ideality as the possibility of repetition refers to signification or 'the problem of the sign' in Derrida's reading of Husserl. The problem in Husserl regarding signification is, according to Derrida, his lack of investigation into the meaning of the sign in general, that is, the constitutive priority of language in the generation of objects, cultural or natural, and meaning to consciousness

The mathematical object is always available to a pure regard, the constitutive *Blick* of the Husserlian *Augenblick*. Despite the constellation of *Augen* and *Blick* here, that is, the physical eye and the gaze, the time of the body eludes the delimitation in the 'Augenblick', the purity of the 'now'. What Derrida takes up in the *Introduction* and develops further in *Speech and Phenomena*, is the "incompleteness" of the Husserlian living present. Derrida's insight is that paradoxically, despite and because of the reductions, the originary escapes the reductive analysis and the *Rückfrage*. What Derrida refers to in this respect is a *sens/ible* as the excess in lived embodied subjectivity that makes it impossible to determine which is the origin, the factual or the essential. The "tendrillike" movement refers to a dialectic that escapes totalisation. That is, because the origin has always already disappeared from view (or the *Vor-stellung*), any structure of genesis is incomplete according to a living present. According to Derrida's reading of Husserl, a "preobjective and pre-exact temporality" and a "polemical unity of appearing and disappearing [informs the living present according to a]... discursive and dialectical intersubjectivity of Time with itself" (152). That is, alterity always already informs the present and the presence of the Husserlian origin. For Derrida, difference is transcendental. The Husserlian living present necessitates delay. According to Derrida, it

living present, the 'impossibility' of consciousness remaining enclosed within itself, is also the necessity of movement. In a 'dialectic' without synthesis consciousness, in phenomenology, is the movement within the finite towards the infinite (138). This notion of an in-stable totality, the openness or excess of the sensible implied in Derrida's *difference*, takes the critique to a notion of immanent genesis or genesis and temporality outside the constellations of eidetic consciousness.

²⁵ See SP, p. 53 in particular. Refer back to chapter one of this work also.

does so because the living present's 'auto-temporalisation' is related to intersubjectivity (152). That is, to perceive this present *as presence*, I must have already anticipated its remaining beyond my own present, and therefore as 'there' for others. Derrida speaks of the discursive and dialectical intersubjectivity of Time with itself "in the infinite multiplicity and infinite implication of its absolute origins" and makes the claim that

[it] justifies every other intersubjectivity in general and makes the polemical unity of appearing and disappearing irreducible. Here delay is the philosophical absolute, because the beginning of methodic reflection [can be only the] implication of *another* absolute origin, prior to it and possible in general (152, citation modified).

In the dialectical movement of time, alterity is always there as possibility. In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida speaks of an alterity or a duration in the Husserlian 'now' "which closes the eye" and "[t]his alterity is even the condition of presence, of presentation and therefore of *Vorstellung* in general" (SP 65). The recognition of alterity or heterogeneity is the recognition of another past present or another origin always already there in retention, and so has an anterior effect on consciousness. Since this movement of time refers to the movement of intersubjectivity, the origin – as absolutely other – involves absence or 'dis-appearance'. In other words, the living present comes out of a "non-identity" with itself "and from the possibility of a retentional trace" so that "[t]he self of the living present is primordially a trace" (IOG 85).

Derrida's notion of 'necessary impossibility' asserts that whereas the self-presence of consciousness in the living present is necessary for meaning as appearance to consciousness, this consciousness cannot be maintained in terms of a purity or unity of the present-now. Phenomenology makes appear, but according to the *Introduction*, "its logos can never appear as such, can never be given in a philosophy of seeing, but can only be heard or understood through the visible" (141). This is so because of the "alterity of the absolute origin" which "structurally appears in my living present" (152). This conception of the trace is presented in the *Introduction* as what "announces itself", or

what “heralds”. That is, it is not presentable. According to Derrida, “rest in the simple maintenance of one Living present” (153) is impossible. The “impossibility” is the impossibility of the *maintenance* of the simultaneity of openness to a *sens/ible and* unification in the purity of the Husserlian *Augenblick*. Derrida describes it as the “pure and interminable disquietude of thought working to ‘reduce’ Difference by exceeding factual infinity toward the infinity of its sense and of its value, that is, while maintaining Difference” (153). This ‘impossibility’ is thus at the origin of appearance. What conditions appearance is what is factually non-apparent: what is transcendental or “said under the concept of ‘transcendental’” would be Difference (153).

(b) *Écart*, Expression and Embodiment

With the notion of a latent intentionality, and the continuity implied in the temporal reversibility of the vortex, Merleau-Ponty departs from Derrida, for whom the divergence of the *écart* – “from a noema to a noema” – does not account for the absolute divergence of ‘the outside’, that is, temporality. However, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of receptivity with regard to the constitution of consciousness does recognise the separation of an outside of consciousness. In a Working Note from May 1959, he makes this clear:

What is the receptive element of absolute consciousness? Husserl is right to say that it is not I who constitute time... But the term “receptivity” is improper precisely because it evokes a Self distinct from the present and who *receives* it – It must be understood simply by opposition to spontaneous acts... (WN 190).

The statement of Derrida’s that there is no “outside text” refers to the insight that there is no translation of a referential reality into language understood as the transference of the intentional correlation, or the present-now. Language, on Derrida’s account, transcends the structure of time consciousness. It is in excess of the possibilities of consciousness

and the rational time-space schema. The *sens/ible* names a signification in general, that is, the inscriptions of a sensible as well as a “writing” (*l’écriture*) that exceeds intentional subjectivity. However, when Merleau-Ponty criticises Husserl’s fixation of experience according to “essential invariants” (46) he points to a ‘phenomenon’ of sense – *sens* – not given as present before me according to my intentional present but rather the otherness of what informs or affects me through the temporality of my embodiment. A *sens/ible* is traced or read by me in my living corporeality. Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis with respect to sense – *sens* – is the corpo-real, an experience of alterity in terms of corpo-real affection. Merleau-Ponty’s notion of reversibility is important to the extent that it emphasises this affectivity in terms of corporeality, and a *sens/ible* or force of signification anterior to the reflections of apodictic intuition. In “The Philosopher and His Shadow” he says:

There are certainly more things in the world and in us than what is perceptible in the narrow sense of the term. Sensible being is not only things but also everything *sketched* out there, *even virtually*, everything which leaves its *trace* there, everything that figures there, even as a divergence and a certain *absence*.... A perceiving body that I see is also a certain absence that is hollowed out and tactfully dealt with behind that body by its behavior (*Signs* 171-2).

Merleau-Ponty speaks of the “trace” of the other as a “certain absence”, and describes the virtual “hollows” of sensibility and behavior in a manner close to Derrida’s insights of the force of language and signification, an outside always already informing a self as embodied being. For Merleau-Ponty language and inter-subjectivity play an important role in any understanding of the emergence of sense – *sens*.

When Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible* speaks of ‘the total situation’, he refers to a temporality in which the subject is produced. Merleau-Ponty’s notion of a “time of the body... of the corporeal schema” refers to the anterior effects on consciousness that are in excess of intentional constitution. Merleau-Ponty understands this anteriority of bodily effect as other than “a ‘modification’ or modalisation of the *Bewusstsein von*... Conversely it is the *Bewusstsein von*, the having perceived that is borne by the past

as massive Being" (VI 244). Merleau-Ponty's '*Sinngemäß*' or massive Being refers to a 'thickness' of Being in the sense of absolute continuity, a 'sensible intelligible'. By contrast, Derrida argues for a separation of the relation between sensible and intelligible. In Derrida, the production of subjectivity happens according to the structure of 'the discursive and dialectical intersubjectivity of time with itself'. *Différance*, as "primordial nonself-presence" (SP 87) must be thought according to the structure of supplement. Derrida's refutation of the pure immediacy of the Husserlian present rests upon the latter's exclusion of the sign in its full sense as *sens/ible* (89). According to Derrida, the indication by the trace signifies an otherness with regard to living presence. Subjectivity, for Derrida, would be an effect of *différance*: subjectivity is constituted through an originary division from itself. *Speech and Phenomena* and the *Introduction* come together here over the concern with the unreflective, history, and the manner in which meaning – as temporality and alterity – produces subjectivity.

When in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty describes the relation between embodiment and time, he claims that embodiment, or the "corporeal schema" is temporality, and "is the foundation of space and of time" (VI 191). The inseparability of embodiment and time in Merleau-Ponty is particular and important in so far as he links embodiment to a notion of absence and the unrepresentable, the notion of a facticity that is necessarily missed by the noetic act and noetic memory, re-collection. *The Visible and the Invisible* speaks of an effaced performance by the body, termed *écart*, an "originating presentation of the unrepresentable" (203). An anteriority must be accounted for with respect to vision and perception, meaning and time. That is, anteriority is a latency of embodied being, which has real pre-noetic effects, in its absence or exclusion in the acts of Husserlian philosophy of consciousness. The Husserlian intelligible cannot, according to Merleau-Ponty, be separated in its *isolated* expression from the *sens/ible* of embodied being.

Merleau-Ponty's notion of the 'body schema' demonstrates the inseparability of time and embodiment, as well as awareness of the effects of its "operative but not thematised meaning" (WN 191) as always already informing any "*Bewusstsein von*" or noetic vision. Language, and specifically *l'écriture* in Derrida, effaces itself in the manner of a body that carries the effects of traces of time and content on the form of the living present.

Language carries the *Zeitmaterie* that Merleau-Ponty describes, the content of the form that disrupts the purity of any formalisation.

However, by contrast to Derrida, Merleau-Ponty's vortex of the body-schema is flesh, that is, a *Sinngemäß* or operative intentionality of B/being that leaves us with the radical continuity of an all-embodied B/being. Although the notion of flesh enables an understanding of the effects and disruption of the noetic living present by a specific temporality of the body akin to that of the relation of time and language in Derrida, the radical continuity implied by the flesh implies an absolute position which perhaps blurs rather than accounts for a transcendent instance in the B/being of beings. The question I pose regarding the notion of flesh is whether it can account for a real differentiation of the sensible and the intelligible. Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility, despite the effects of alterity, temporality and the corpo-real, is bound up with an *écart* that only 'approaches' a real "separation" or "openness", as the excess of sense in any impression, perception and act of 'knowledge'. Merleau-Ponty's analyses conceptualise the positivity of things as excess of *sens* according to being understood first and foremost as corpo-real being. Perceptual *sens* is inseparable from *écart* in the analyses of Merleau-Ponty, and he speaks about understanding perception in terms of differentiation:

Understand that the "to be conscious" = to have a figure on a ground... the figure-ground distinction introduces a third term between the "subject" and the "object". It is that separation (*écart*) first of all that is the perceptual meaning" (WN 197).

In Merleau-Ponty's well-known example of reversibility of 'the touched hand touching' as a matter of *sens*, 'reversibility' is something that is "always imminent and never realized in fact" (VI 147). He continues to say: "my flesh and that of the world therefore involve clear zones, clearings, about which pivot their opaque zones" (148). In this notion of "opaque zones", of an absence the trace of which conditions presence, Merleau-Ponty is very close to Derrida. What is valuable in both their analyses is that the emergence of subjectivity is conceived as a certain positioning, or as affectivity. Presence to self is

conditioned by what is other than presence. An otherness *in-forms* or affects me, my sight, but is constitutive of my emergence as a Self. Though the notion of flesh is meant to question ontological oppositions, it is not entirely circular. Merleau-Ponty emphasises the difference between the figure and ground or horizon as where *sens* emerges (197). Moreover, alterity in Merleau-Ponty is not “given” to consciousness in any simple sense; it is traced as an absence represented by the other’s corpo-reality. Our orientation as corporeal beings is towards a *sens* inseparable from the corpo-reality of an other. However, Merleau-Ponty’s *écart* is perhaps – with respect to Derrida – not an adequate divergence.

Merleau-Ponty says in “The Philosopher and his Shadow” that “...each one of us [is] pregnant with the others and confirmed by them in his body”, and continues:

This baroque world is not a concession of mind to nature; for although meaning is everywhere figurative, it is meaning which is at issue everywhere. This renewal of the world is also mind’s renewal, a rediscovery of that brute mind which is untamed by any culture anew [...]. From then on the irrelative is not nature in itself, nor the system of absolute consciousness’ apprehensions, nor man either, but that “teleology” Husserl speaks about which is written and thought about in parentheses – that jointing and framing of Being *which is being realized through man* (*Signs*, 181, my emphasis).

Merleau-Ponty’s use of ‘teleology’ or *fungierende* (operative) intentionality refers to a genesis of Being, without the absolute divergence implied in the Derridean notion of *Différance*. Merleau-Ponty’s resuscitation of intentionality involves a notion of continuity which for Derrida would precisely strip power from signification as the absolute divergence of the ‘anarchy of the noema’²⁶. For Derrida, it is not Being itself which is the teleology of consciousness. However, the Derridean critique would agree that

²⁶ Refer to chapter one for the meaning of this expression in Derrida. See also “Genesis and Structure”, p. 163. The noema as transcendent instance in being, which remains the same through time, cannot be identified with any continuous life.

consciousness *receives* signification, as an imposition constitutive of transcendental consciousness. Derrida and Merleau-Ponty both break with the notion of an essence that *rests* in consciousness, in representation. In other words, they refute the notion of constitution of the object according to a supposed fullness of representation, as this 'fullness' gives Being as abstraction or translation of a self-present 'being of thought'. The criticism is directed by Derrida, as well as by Merleau-Ponty, towards the delimitation that is set by an approach to experience according to a pure consciousness. The problem of Husserl's theory of intuition, the assumption that perception is intuition of essential features of the object and that the meaning of the perceived is conceived as a presentation of its own essence, is its 'exclusion' of a sensible dimension of signification and genesis.

Derrida conceives generation of meaning in terms of a disruption into consciousness; this disruption is the indication of the otherness of signification with respect to consciousness. Derrida as well as Merleau-Ponty criticises the Cartesian heritage of classical phenomenology's notion of a positive being of thought separable from a dimension of materiality. However, Derrida's thought does not comply with the ontological propositions of Merleau-Ponty's late work.

Merleau-Ponty states that "concepts such as 'subject', consciousness, 'self-consciousness', 'mind...involve the idea of a *res cogitans*, of a positive being of thought—whence there results the immanence in the unreflected of the results of reflection" (VI 104). Merleau-Ponty's critique of 'the primacy of essence' locates the problem of Husserl's positive intuition or recognition of *eidos* as its basis in the assumption that Being is its resistance to nothingness; and thus characterised by a negation. That is, whatever is for thought *is*. In *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty argues that the coupling of Being-for-thought and being-object prevents an understanding of perception and sensible Being:

The thing defined [in terms of its identifiable nucleus, but without power of its own, the thing-object, as the In-itself] is not the thing of our experience, it is the image we obtain of it by projecting it into a universe where experience would not

settle on anything, where the spectator would abandon the spectacle—in short, by confronting it with the possibility of nothingness (215, translation modified).

...in order to reduce an experience to its essence, we should have to achieve a distance from it that would put it entirely under our gaze [Husserlian *Vorstellung*], with all the implications of sensoriality or thought that come into play in it, bring it and bring ourselves wholly to the transparency of the imaginary, think it without the support of any ground...(149-50).

Derrida as well as Merleau-Ponty criticises the consequence of the phenomenological reduction in terms of this delimitation of Being as what is in fact not nothing and its recourse to a principle of sufficient reason. Merleau-Ponty attempts to 'begin with Being' in terms of 'concrete existence' effected by the reduction, but in terms of the intertwining of the perceiving-perceived of perceptual presence; that is, conditioned presence implies a negativity which is not thought in terms of nothingness. Negativity, in Merleau-Ponty's ontology, is a name for the in-visible, or the idea of Being's presence thought in terms of an inherent distance: "It is a question of a negation-reference ... or separation (*écart*) ...common to all the *invisibles* because the visible has been defined as dimensionality of Being, i.e as universal, and because therefore everything that is not a *part* of it is necessarily *enveloped in it* and is but a modality of the same transcendence" (WN 247). *Working Notes* of May 1960 consider the sensible and the visible as the "occasion to say what nothingness is—Nothingness is nothing more or less than the invisible" (258), but since the "visible is not an objective positive, the *invisible* cannot be a negation in the logical sense" (257). Merleau-Ponty identifies as a "total philosophical error" the thought that determines the visible in terms of "*objective* presence (or the idea of this presence) (visual picture)... this entails the idea of the *quale* as in itself [when] the *quale* is always a certain type of latency" (258). The consequence of Merleau-Ponty's critique is the form of 'indirect ontology' which claims as its "essential notion" that of flesh, "which is the sensible in the twofold sense of what one senses and what senses... one cannot posit one sole sensible without positing as torn from my flesh... and my flesh itself is one of the sensibles in which an inscription of all the others is made" (259-60). For Merleau-Ponty,

the notion of 'fold' implied here "means that my body is made of the same flesh as the world":

Flesh of the world described... as segregation, dimensionality, continuation, latency, encroachment...refer us to the perceiving-perceived *Einfühlung*, for they mean that we are already *in* the being thus described, that we *are of it*, that *between* (my emphasis) it and us there is *Einfühlung* (248).

Dimensionality, according to Merleau-Ponty, refers to a "mute experience of a mute meaning"; an experience or meaning which puts into question the notion of constitution and what he terms the "ontology of the object" (249), or the constitutive source of perception in consciousness. Merleau-Ponty refers to a "felt [*senti*]" at the same time the culmination of subjectivity and the culmination of materiality, they are in a relation of transgression or of overlapping—This also means: my body is not only one perceived among others, it is the measurement (*mesurant*) of all, *Nullpunkt* of all the dimensions of the world" (248). The problem with Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of dimensionality, lie with the notion of *Nullpunkt*, as it presupposes an absorption or absolute generality with regard to the envelopment of subjectivity in B/being. It detracts from the singularity or specificity of alterity with respect to the emergence of *sens*.

For Merleau-Ponty, the 'starting point' is a "zero of being which is not nothingness" (260); 'nothing' is, according to Merleau-Ponty, a distance between identicals. According to Derrida, on the other hand, 'nothing' designates a difference between parallels. The metaphor of the fold as description of an in-visible cannot for Derrida be thought in terms of an *écart*, as the notion indicates a separation which is not quite absolute divergence.

The reason I bring together Merleau-Ponty and Derrida over this notion of *écart* is that I want to show that they both accomplish analyses which enable an orientation in thought with regard to the materiality of the conditions of meaning, that emphasises the anteriority of an affective corpo-real. I anticipate with this comparison what I find valuable in Levinas's analyses of inter-subjectivity and the meaning of Alterity²⁷.

Merleau-Ponty's teleology of Being, the notion of the general extension of a perceptual logic of the sensible world, involves a notion of continuity that Derrida would consider to be a detraction from signification and the differential structure of life and experience as these inform any act of consciousness. Both Derrida and Merleau-Ponty point to an anteriority with regard to the constitutional ego, a contamination by alterity that refutes the notion of a pure self-presence. However, for Derrida, there is no absolute continuity between the existence of subjectivity and the transcendence of alterity or the noematic instance. Merleau-Ponty's latent intentionality and the 'mis'placement of *écart* as what, I believe, Derrida would consider an inadequate divergence, displaces and 'neutralises' the 'violence' of the Otherness or the 'anarchy' of the noema. In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida emphasises an irreducible *difference* between existence in this sense and the transcendent instance which Merleau-Ponty's displacement of intentional emergence does not recognise. I conclude that the displacement of intentionality to flesh obscures rather than supports the notion of alterity with respect to the emergence of *sens*.

(b) Language and Non-presence: Body beyond 'Flesh'.

Derrida's reading of Emmanuel Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics" shows the 'metaphysics of presence' as precisely the 'consequence' of the way in which phenomenology is the ceaseless working over of the "themes of non-presence" which it resists as well as introduces²⁷. Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh and the implication of continuity remove this difference between pre-intentional existence and the transcendence of the Different or Alterity, in a similar manner to Heidegger in *Being and Time*. Whereas Heidegger positions transcendence in an interiority of Being, rather than in the subject, Merleau-Ponty joins Being and subject as the common flesh of the world.

²⁷ I discuss Levinas on ethics and alterity in chapter four.

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 121.

In the discussion of the relation of painting and language in “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence”, Merleau-Ponty makes it clear that meanings are inseparable from the *medium* of expression: Ideality “already streams forth along the articulations of the aesthesiological body”²⁹. It is the notion of ‘medium’ that is problematic when for Merleau-Ponty there is no transcendence in the sense of an absolute divergence. Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty ‘conflate’ the transcendence of Alterity and existence as being-in-the-world.

Derrida’s *Speech and Phenomena* criticises Husserl’s attempt at bracketing indication in order to ‘free’ expression – or the linguistic sign – in terms of an “existential constitution”. Expression, for Husserl, as the “solitary mental life” of a “language without communication” (SP 42), must be freed from indication, which opens the mind to a movement of “thought from something to something else” (42); that is, thought passes through alterity³⁰. According to Derrida, this movement of thought is the ‘consequence’ of an absolute divergence, the fact that the transcendent instance is difference. Derrida points out that the threat of indication for Husserl is precisely the threat to the directedness of transcendence, as indication refers to the re-involvement of language in “everything that falls subject to the ‘reductions’” (30).

Levinas considers the directedness of Husserlian intuitionism to reduce the matter of meaning to manner, or signification in a broad sense to meaning by ego-consciousness, recognising that “any consideration of method [is more than] a purely formal logic and [goes] deep into ... [the] conception of being”³¹. Derrida takes up this point in his critique of Husserl in terms of a metaphysics of presence³², and over the specific attempt

²⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence”, in *Signs*, trans. Richard McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 152.

³⁰ As demonstrated by Derrida’s *Speech and Phenomena* in chapter one, ‘expression’ refers to private meaningful experience. ‘Indication’ is its structural linguistic externalization.

³¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl’s Phenomenology*, trans. Andre Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963 [1930]), iiv.

³² In general. See *Writing and Difference*, 118, especially. See also chapter one of this work.

in Husserl to separate signification in general from self-present expression. In indication phenomenality is inseparable from materiality: the *matter* of existence is the threat to the formality of a 'pure' expression. According to Derrida, a pure expression is a contradiction in terms. For Derrida, the paradox of transcendental determinations extends to the impossible figuration of expression in terms of the appropriation or 'neutralisation' involved in Husserl's rewriting of "*Körper als Leib*"³³. The "body of the signifier" (77), or the materiality of signification, is irreducible to pure meaning/expression. Derrida's language here indicates a contamination of thought by body.

Merleau-Ponty is closest to Derrida's critique when in the *Working Notes* he elaborates on what he intends by the connection between, not only thought and language, but between perception and *expression* of the perception³⁴:

The taking possession of the world of silence, such as the description of the human body effects it... is the world articulated, evaluated to the *Wesen*, spoken—the description of the perceptual logos is a usage of *logos prophorikos*. Can this rending characteristic of reflection (which, wishing to return to itself, leaves itself) come to an end? There would be needed a silence that envelops the speech anew, after one has come to recognize that speech enveloped the alleged silence of the psychological coincidence. What will this silence be? As the reduction finally is not for Husserl a transcendental immanence, but the disclosing of the *Weltthesis*, this silence will *not be the contrary* of language (WN 179).

Merleau-Ponty here follows Fink's evaluation of the reduction in terms of the question of genesis, as does Derrida. That is, the reduction strips away all derived and interpreted

³³ That is, the differentiation of the physical material body and the 'living body'. See IOG pp. 97-98 especially. See also, SP pp. 81-82.

³⁴ Merleau-Ponty also recognises that there is no pure expression. Merleau-Ponty speaks of a self-movement in terms of expression. "... henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return toward their source and, in the patient and silent labor of *desire*, begin the paradox of expression" (VI 144). Ultimately, what is emphasised in Merleau-Ponty regarding expression and body is that the "body contributes more than it receives" (144). Problematically this is attained by the "body in general" (143), the coupling with the flesh of the world.

aspects of experience in order to consider experience as it comes into being. This would be the genetic reduction as opposed to the eidetic reduction, which strives to attain what is essential to experience rather than its emergence. According to Merleau-Ponty's development of the notion of genesis with respect to perception and *expression*, and the 'perceptual logic' of the sensible world, the origin of signification is thought in terms of an openness of bodily being upon the world, but furthermore and more problematically, as a givenness of transcendence *as* perceptual being. Merleau-Ponty's description of a genesis beyond constitutive subjectivity accords with Derrida's criticism of phenomenological tenets to a certain point. Merleau-Ponty describes a primordial *anonymity* of bodily being:

He who thinks, perceives etc. is... negativity as openness, by the body to the world—Reflexivity must be understood by the body, by the relation to self of the body, of speech. The speaking-listening duality remains at the heart of the I, its negativity is but the *hollow* between speaking and hearing, the point where their equivalence is formed—The body negative or language negative *is* the subject (246).

In "The Sensible World and the World of Expression" from his *Lectures at the College de France*, Merleau-Ponty notes how in intuitionism's determination of objective Being, "[t]he meaning of an object is given only as a systematic deformation of our universe of experience, without our ever being able to name its operative principle"³⁵. In other words, signification and sensible genesis, both being names for the force of a certain outside, are obscure:

Every perception is the perception of something solely by way of being at the same time the relative imperception of a horizon or background which it implies but does not thematise. Perceptual consciousness is therefore indirect or even inverted in relation to an ideal of adequation which it presumes but never

³⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Sensible World and Expression", in *Themes from the Lectures at the College de France 1952-1960*, p. 4.

encounters directly... There is truly a reversal [...] when one passes from the sensible world in which we are caught, to a world of expression, where we seek to capture significations to serve our purpose, although this reversal and the “retrogressive movement” of truth are solicited by a perceptual anticipation. Properly speaking, the expression which language makes possible *resumes and amplifies another expression which is revealed in the “archaeology” of the perceived world*³⁶.

In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida argues that there is no real separation of perception from signification, silence and voice: his notion of contamination refers precisely to an interweaving (SP 15)³⁷. The ‘problem of the sign’ refers to the separation of indication and expression in Husserl, and Derrida’s argument as to their inseparability, the contamination of the latter by the former. For Derrida, this does not refer to an absolute continuity of sensible and intelligible being. The positing of presence through expression is required for there to be meaning, but this presence is informed or conditioned – contaminated – by what is radically other than itself. Contamination refers to the alterity of an outside or necessary externalisation that always already comes to make up the present-now.

Contamination as what, according to Derrida, underlies Husserl’s ambiguity regarding retention, does not however lend itself to Merleau-Ponty’s conception of ‘reversal’. What is at stake in the notion of contamination is to show that the ontological differences posited according to phenomenological methodology are ‘interwoven’; what follows for Derrida is that indication involves an *alterity* or a “certain outside” which is neither purely inside nor purely outside. Derrida’s ‘ultra-transcendental’ concept of life³⁸ implies a notion of the ‘life’ of silence noted by Merleau-Ponty, as ‘inexpressible’ according to the analogical and equivocal character of language (SP 13). Merleau-Ponty recognises this relation of expression and perception. The ‘in-visible’ – what, according to Derrida’s

³⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures*, 4.

³⁷ See also chapter one of this work.

³⁸ See chapter one.

critique of philosophy as metaphysics, is *indicated* – refers to ‘something like’ “the body-negative or language-negative duality [which] *is* the subject” (VI 246). However, Merleau-Ponty states, that “the expression which language makes possible resumes and amplifies another expression which is revealed in the ‘archaeology’ of the perceived world”; there is no ‘difference’ for Merleau-Ponty between the ‘language’ of perception and equivocal language proper. This difference is precisely what Derrida makes claim to when he states “language guards the difference which guards language” and notes that what is heterogeneous to language is always already archived there (SP 14-15). Derrida’s notion of *différance* and trace imply the impossibility of a fullness or continuity of an ‘originary’ movement of expression conceived as flesh.

The in-visible, as investigated by Merleau-Ponty’s *Visible and Invisible*, concerns the body as the unconscious before the conscious, and in this sense refers to a notion of a primordial anonymity with regard to consciousness, and claims that ‘reflexivity be understood by the body’. Merleau-Ponty’s body is the elaboration of the Husserlian body as *Leib* rather than *Körper*. While the displacement of focus to the body puts in question the presumption of transference on the part of Husserlian eidetic analysis and the claim to the pure presence of constitutive consciousness, the understanding of the bodily dimension of subjectivity as bound up with worldly being in terms of a ‘flesh of the world’ obscures more than clarifies a non-conscious dimension of subjectivity’s affective life. My argument is that neither Husserl’s nor Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology adequately broach the idea of an affective dimension of bodily subjectivity in terms of the non-conscious and emotive dimensions of subjectivity. The doctrine of constitution, whether placed primarily with consciousness or displaced in terms of bodily Being and an ontology that questions dualisms, cannot lay-out the Otherness of signification and sense.

When Merleau-Ponty develops the notion that “every visible develops a ground which is not visible in the sense the figure is” (WN 246), this opens up the dimension of signification referred to by Derrida and Levinas. ‘The thing itself’ eludes Husserlian intuition. What follows in Merleau-Ponty’s statement of the in-visible particularly

resonates with what Levinas refers to as the emergence of subjectivity: “[which] even in what is figural or figurative in it, is not an objective *quale*, an in Itself surveyed from above”; the point is that “to see is always to see more than one sees” (246-7).

I believe Merleau-Ponty’s ‘dimensionality’ referring to a ‘silent fabric’ of existence ‘which is not contrary to language’ – and which accounts for a creation of modes of expression before the ‘objectification of the named I’ – offers a similar understanding of a sensible dimension of lived being and signification as Deleuze’s designation of a dimension of virtuality with respect to the production of sense.

Derrida’s critique, in *Speech and Phenomena*, of the notion of a plenitude of presence, opens the question of language with respect to the being that is always in surplus of the ideal nature of the sign on Husserl’s account. Merleau-Ponty’s criticism of Husserlian eidetics extends to his views on language and expression: eidetic phenomenology considers language in terms of logic. Merleau-Ponty, as well as Derrida, rejects the formality of signification according to a system of translation in which the object is directly referable to consciousness. According to the deconstruction of the “plenitude of presence”, “the thing itself always escapes” (SP 104).

Merleau-Ponty’s “Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence”³⁹ theorises language according to a development of Saussurean diacritics⁴⁰. Signs, according to Merleau-Ponty, constitute a particular sort of unity in terms of their mutual dependence and differentiation according to a logic of ‘interweaving’. Merleau-Ponty’s transposition of the metaphorical language of his ontology undermines the logic of Saussurean structuralism. While delimited by the formality of linguistics, signs are here described as productive of meaning to the extent that they are woven together according to a production of the “opaque fabric” of language (IL 41). In *Indirect Language*, Merleau-Ponty emphasises the ‘between of’ words and phonemes as made up of “threads of

³⁹ Hereafter IL.

⁴⁰ See Ferdinand Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Seehay, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGrawHill, 1966)

silence” and the ‘fold of speech’, which together make up a totality (46); what is suggested is a language other than the language made up of equivocal signs.

Merleau-Ponty approaches the question of an “origin of language” and this leads him to a consideration of “the act of expression”⁴¹. As the ‘agency’ of an “allusive, indirect” language, Merleau-Ponty construes the body-subject according to the aforementioned ‘negativity as openness to the world’. Conceived neither in terms of passivity nor quite as an agency, in the *Working Notes* Merleau-Ponty describes “the body-negative or the language-negative [as] the subject—the body, language as alter ego” (WN 246). The departure from the Saussurian language system is evident. For Merleau-Ponty expression is what happens as an event “in the intercourse of signs” (IL 45). As *generated* by the threads of silence, which envelops them as an opaque fabric (46), acts of expression are inextricable from an ontological proposition: expression is understood in terms of a bodily reflexivity.

Expressive language in Merleau-Ponty is an “originating operation”: “Let us begin by understanding that there is a tacit language and that painting speaks in this way” (47). Merleau-Ponty speaks of the bodily gesture of a painter’s brushstroke as what makes a painting “that which it was in the process of becoming” (45). Conferring to the *painting* the emergence of expression, this statement must be linked to what he says about the speaking subject as “nobody, the anonymous” rather than a ‘consciousness of’, and “the body, language as alter ego” in the *Working Notes*. According to the *Visible and the Invisible* “perception [is] a *divergence* [écart] by relation to a level, that is, the idea of the primordial Being, of the Convention of conventions, of the Speech before speech” (VI 201). Merleau-Ponty’s concern, in describing language in terms of a “phonematic system”, is to point out a dimensionality that Derrida would characterise as “inexpressible”; it is to “point the finger at the invisible” (SP 23). According to Merleau-Ponty, as in painting, the visible (work) is “but the *trace* of a total movement of Speech” (VI 211). The development upon Saussurian diacritics amounts to the proposition of a

⁴¹ Merleau-Ponty makes a point which recalls Gilles Deleuze’s notion of the ‘paradox of expression’ in the *Logic of Sense*, that expressions exist as what is expressed and do not exist outside the expressed (VI 144).

perceptual logic; perception is a “diacritical, relative, oppositional system” according to which the sensible as such is silence, is *ungraspable* (213-14) in light of conscious motivation. There is no perception understood in terms of the purity of phenomenological intuition.

Derrida’s approach to the question of the origins of language also emphasises language as diacritical; difference is a “condition of signification”⁴². Merleau-Ponty’s approach to the question of language and its origins amounts to a type of ‘expressionism’, it emphasises the ‘origin’ as a *mode of expression* – a certain virtuality or inscription of a sensible: in other words, a generation of the ‘silence’ of the ‘fabric’ of existence. For Derrida inscription is at the origin of a creation that, like Merleau-Ponty’s expression, puts in question phenomenology’s attribution of the fullness of presence to the signified correlate of intuitive consciousness. Insofar as inscription is thought in terms of a creation prior to a name and agency of subjectivity, as that which precisely tends to substitute itself for its own origin, it disrupts metaphysical ideality, and testifies to “the essential possibility of non-intuition”⁴³.

Merleau-Ponty’s acknowledgement of the inscribed character of existence, in terms of a ‘perceptual logic’ informing the notion of the in-visible, converges with Derrida on this point: “The I, really, is nobody, is anonymous...prior to all objectification, denomination, in order to be the Operator, or the one to whom all this occurs. The named I, the I named...is an object... an objectification” (WN 246). Ultimately, what is indicated by these estimations regarding the origins of language, by Merleau-Ponty as well as Derrida, is that thought occurs according to a process of differentiation of sensible being. To sum up, both critiques concern the resuscitation of a primordial dimension of signification, of the sensible from which thought emerges:

⁴² Jacques Derrida, “Différance”, in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) p. 10

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) p. 40

The living present springs forth out of this non-identity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace. It is always a trace. This trace cannot be thought out on the basis of a simple present whose life would be within itself; the self of the living present is primordially a trace... Being-primordial must be thought on the basis of the trace (SP 85).

II. Michel Henry and Material Phenomenology

Merleau-Ponty's recognition at the time of *The Visible and the Invisible* that "[t]he problems posed in *Ph.P* are insoluble because I start there from the 'consciousness'- 'object' distinction" (VI 200), reflects the rejection of the classical philosophy of consciousness which is the starting point for Michel Henry and his development of a 'material phenomenology'.

Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy, if considered as a project to overcome a 'philosophy of consciousness', intellectualist conceptuality and a philosophical rationalism whether idealist or realist, questions the very categories of a Husserlian phenomenology, linguistic and conceptual. He suggests in *The Visible and the Invisible* that "we do not allow ourselves to introduce into our description concepts issued from reflection, whether psychological or transcendental...[but] must, at the beginning, eschew notions such as 'acts of consciousness' ... 'matter', 'form', and even 'image' and 'perception'" (VI 157-8). Like Derrida, he notes the complexity of the issue of language but, like the former, deals with transcendental philosophy 'from the inside', linguistically and conceptually. While Derrida as well as Merleau-Ponty reject rationalism as the presumption of universalism on the part of reason or constitutive consciousness, both critiques operate according to an attempt to show the limits of reason and to expand upon the concept in

order that it may accommodate a certain 'opacity of the fact', of sensible existence⁴⁴. The rejection of a rationalist conception of reason is a reaction to the postulation of an evidential correlation of truth between reason and reality, the Husserlian rational consciousness, which holds the lay-out of this reality within itself⁴⁵.

Derrida and Merleau-Ponty's critique of the philosophy of consciousness, however, does not – as with Heidegger's departure from Husserlian phenomenology – reject either the notion of consciousness or subjectivity. The critique of the privilege of representational consciousness attempts to open up an understanding of a sensible that is always in excess of the delimitation of Husserl's Being according to rational postulation, or 'knowledge'. While these critiques amount to a rejection of a particular sense of subjectivism, a focus on subjectivity is evident: "[T]he thought of subjectivity [*la pensée du subjectif*] is one of these solids that philosophy will have to digest..."⁴⁶. Any thought of an anteriority of self-consciousness "owes [the] idea of and taste for primordial ontology to just this self-consciousness. There are some ideas which make it impossible for us to return to a time prior to their existence, even and especially if we have moved beyond them, and subjectivity is one of them"⁴⁷. The notion of subjectivity, supported by Derrida as well as Merleau-Ponty, rejects the reduction of the transcendent to the immanent on the Husserlian model. Both critiques share a Heideggerian concern with a being irreducible to consciousness. However, contrary to Heidegger's propositions regarding what is commonly interpreted as a 'Being without beings', Merleau-Ponty's move regarding 'indirect ontology' is based on the subjectivity of beings: "My 'indirect method' (being in the beings) is alone conformed with being" (VI 179). By positioning subjective being in the center of the philosophical interrogation, as well as of the ontological considerations, Merleau-Ponty repeats phenomenology's fidelity to subjective experience. However, he

⁴⁴ See also Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, trans. Hubert L. Dreufus and Patricia A. Dreufus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964)

⁴⁵ Refer to Edmund Husserl, *Ideas I*, § 53 and 54.

⁴⁶ See G.B Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981) p. 303.

⁴⁷ Merleau-Ponty, "Everywhere and Nowhere", in *Signs* trans. Richard McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964) p. 154.

does this in order to ascertain the limits of this 'experience' by that which exceeds transcendental reflection. Merleau-Ponty's insight is that a sensible dimension of experience exceeds the idea formed by reflective and reflexive consciousness. Being or being is, in Merleau-Ponty, thought according to a certain 'absence' to consciousness, irreducible to the classical 'experience' of the relation of subject and world, as an *inessential* 'source' of transcendence. The insight, which he shares with Derrida, is that absence is part of and a function of presence, and the other way round. The problematic notion of the flesh in Merleau-Ponty does not detract from the importance of his thought on the body: that "our body is a being of two leaves, from one side a thing among things and otherwise what sees them and touches them" and its "double belongingness to the order of 'object' and the order of the 'subject' ... teaches us that each calls for the other" (137).

However, the notion in Merleau-Ponty of an "intentionality within Being" (VI 244) – while it puts into question the consequence of the Husserlian analysis, that being is being object – is problematic. The notion of an intentionality thus displaced to bodily existence, as a de-intellectualisation of the notion – nevertheless raises the question of the meaning of the notion with regard to pre-reflective being. The notion must, I believe, "forego in advance the understanding of the sensible"⁴⁸; it does not adequately meet it. According to Derrida, the pre-reflective dimension of signification must be understood in terms of its otherness. My argument is that the notion of an operative intentionality obscures more than clarifies the dimension of pre- or non-reflective being and the issue of self-awareness. Henry's "Material Phenomenology and Language"⁴⁹ raises the question of otherness in terms of a reconsideration of phenomenality and a concomitant reorientation regarding the meaning of self-awareness: My argument is that the real 'object' of investigation is the relation between otherness and self-awareness.

⁴⁸ Merleau-Ponty, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, arguing against "the bifurcation of subject and object", (137)

⁴⁹ Michel Henry, "Material phenomenology and language (or, pathos and language)" in *Continental Philosophy Review* 32, trans. Leonard Lawlor, 343 – 365, 1999. Hereafter PL.

According to Henry, the main problem of classical phenomenology lies with its methodology, and the central notion of reduction. Merleau-Ponty's insight is that of the "incompleteness of the reduction" (VI 178). For Merleau-Ponty the meaning of the reduction is this, the impossibility of a complete reflection and transparence with respect to the materiality of our being. The reduction as such points to the excess of the sensible as the *opacity of the fact*, "the reduction itself [is] the rediscovery of vertical being" (178). Thus, Merleau-Ponty's elaboration of the reduction considers its significance in terms of its testament to the excess of sensible Being which eludes it, and to the approach to ontology as 'indirect'. Bodily being is the 'in-between' that always already qualifies any 'access' to Being. According to Henry's critique of classical transcendental phenomenology, the phenomenological reduction demonstrates the impasses of a reduction of what he terms *Life* to an object of the world. The methodological move from the empirical world to the transcendental concept of the world as the condition of possibility of the appearance of the former, amounts to a reduction of the affective reality of life. The experience of 'transcendental life' is inadequately approached. The accomplishment of the doctrine of constitution involves, for Henry, a misconception of the conditions of possibility for manifestation. The conditions of possibility for the appearing of *Life* cannot be thought in terms of the objectivation performed by the transcendental-intentional subject of classical phenomenology. According to Henry, manifestation cannot be reduced to the manifestation of the world objectified. Henry raises the question of an affective experience in terms of *phenomenality* as the condition of possibility for appearance or manifestation.

(a) Pathos, Language and Phenomenology

Michel Henry's development from classical phenomenology amounts to a critique of several of its major tenets. In "Material Phenomenology and Language" (1999), Henry points out that a self-conscious thematisation of phenomenology establishes the object of

phenomenology as *phenomenality* in that “phenomenality constitutes our access to the phenomenon” (PL 344): The question of method is reducible to an “*openness of a path* leading to the phenomenon; it allows us to apprehend the phenomenon and to know it” (344). In face of Husserl’s sustained preoccupation with the centrality of the method, Henry emphasises the priority – in both senses – of the question of phenomenality; “the method remains so dependent on phenomenality that its possibility as well as its many difficulties are based on it” (344). Henry notes how Heidegger, in section seven of *Being and Time*, points out that phenomenality, to the extent that it is the possibility of an access to phenomena, *constitutes the possibility of language*, and it is with this assertion that the interest and direction of the following lie. Phenomenality is what allows the encounter between phenomena and our apprehension. According to Henry, this is so,

because they show themselves to us, we can speak of them, name them, refer *ourselves* to them *in this nomination*, describe them, produce on their subject the many predications out of which our knowledge and our discourses are simultaneously composed... [a]ppearing thus constitutes the incontrovertible condition of every conceivable language... by discovering first of all everything that this language speaks about at the same time as what it is saying about it and will be able to say about it (344).

According to Henry’s thesis we are left with a different, reversed sense of a ‘phenomenology of language’. Language can no longer be considered as object according to the approach of phenomenological analysis or elucidation: “*language belongs on the contrary to the internal conditions of this process of elucidation*” (345); it finds its possibility in phenomenality.

This question of pure phenomenality has, as Henry points out, been left aside as phenomenology developed historically from Husserl. According to classical phenomenology, being is determined in terms of an appearance to a subjectivity reduced to the transcendental Ego. The paradox of transcendental determination, as noted by Fink and then Derrida, problematically leaves open the question of the principle of the subordination of ontology to phenomenology (345). Henry’s argument is that this leads to

the “phenomenological indetermination of the *principle* of phenomenology... [a] disastrous confusion of the appearing of the world with the essence of all conceivable appearing overtakes phenomenology as a whole and notably its theory of language since the latter is based on appearing” (346). Henry’s critique is directed against what he terms “the ontological monism” of classical phenomenology, the presumption that there be only one type of phenomenality, or mode of manifestation⁵⁰. The point Henry makes here is based on the same recognition of an excess of Being with regard to the transcendental determinations of classical phenomenology. Henry’s critique repeats the reservations of Merleau-Ponty as well as Derrida when he notes the main problem of Husserlian phenomenology: its intuitionism and doctrine of intentionality. Henry quotes Husserl’s ‘principle of principles’ as the exhibit of “the full scope of [the] confusion” (346). When Husserl states in § 24 of *Ideas I* that “every originary donative intuition is an in principle source of knowledge”, what is implied in this constellation is an identifiable structure of consciousness as intentional and thematic. The emergence of phenomenality is thought according to the “power to institute in the condition of being a phenomenon” (346). Henry notes that what follows is a subordination of language to “phenomenality understood as distancing”, and “although it is still the original making things be seen in perception, intentionality is... limited to signifying them in language... Dissociated from perception, composed of meanings, intentional language is still, however, subordinated to, entirely dependent on, one sole conception of phenomenality” (346). Henry points out that, with regard to intentionality, the ‘monstration’ – the appearance, the ‘bringing to light’ according to the Greek concept of *phainomenon* – is identified in terms of this appearance, and an ‘outside’ thus constituted. For Henry “this advent of the outside from the outside constitutes the phenomenalisation of phenomenality” (347).

Henry notes the reductive elaboration in Husserl as well as Heidegger of appearing as the appearing of the ‘outside of the world’, of a reality that *is* only in its self-exteriority and so stripped of substance. The formality of the intentional *correlation*, as well as the

⁵⁰ Henry’s overall work is centered on the issue of self-manifestation, as what disrupts the misconception of “ontological monism”. His argument is that there is more than one type of phenomenality or manifestation and that “self-manifestation is the essence of manifestation”. See Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, 1973), 3. I shall return to this point.

Heideggerian redirection and attempt to think 'Being without beings', demonstrate the incapacity of appearing to posit the reality *unconcealed by it*. Henry's elaboration of the notion of (un) concealment and 'monstration' with regard to language, notes that what is insufficiently taken into account is the nature of an *event* before the propositions of commonsense analysis or science: language as a "capacity for making us see what it designates by naming it before pursuing the analysis of it" (345). The things to which propositions refer, 'show themselves' to us, but "also these propositions themselves must be able to show themselves, and they can do so only in a monstration proper to language [...] The primitive Saying is never therefore on the side of what is said, that is, on the side of what is shown; it is what shows" (345). The *event* proposed by Henry refers to the notion of an in-between of theory and materiality. Henry's understanding of phenomenality considers phenomenality as an anterior condition of phenomenon and language and problematises the classical priority of the correlative determinations of intentional consciousness. According to Henry,

all systems of language (beyond their diversity, beyond the diversity of their structures and their own rules) refer to a prior possibility of speaking and hearing which is no longer a phenomenon but precisely the phenomenon's possibility – since only by adventing in the phenomenal condition is anything, regardless of what it is, susceptible of being said (345).

Henry's conception of a prior phenomenality as an 'internal condition' of the phenomenon and language may be understood in terms of a relation of virtuality and actuality as described by Gilles Deleuze. Phenomenality understood in terms of a virtual capacity is the phenomenon's potential, a condition of manifestation thought in terms of a power to make manifest, a capacity of signification independent of intentional analysis or the advent of meaning according to an intuition of consciousness. Heidegger's *On the Way to Language*, notes that logos is the saying which in showing lets beings and Being appear as the advent into presence of what is present. What is contained in this constellation is the identification of the monstration or 'unconcealment' and an 'originary

language'⁵¹. Henry's reading of Heidegger refutes the latter's "assimilation of saying to the appearing of the world" (PL 347): that is, the reciprocal presupposition of appearing and speech, according to the Greek sense of appearing, as coming to light, *phainomenon* – being in terms of vision. Henry makes the point that the reduction performed by a notion of language in which the unconcealment is different from the unconcealed – the originary truth and what is true in Heidegger's terms – involves an indifference or 'loss of' material being; the words of this language thus founded are indifferent to and different from the referent. The sole conception of language according to classical phenomenology concerns a signification in which reality, Being or the world as such is intended; as such this language is marked by an incapacity, based on what Henry designates as a prior ontological 'insufficiency' (348). The separation of inside and outside is thought according to the intentional correlation; the 'incapacity' that relates difference and indifference is here, as Henry points out, only a consequence of this insufficiency (349). The paradox in the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger concerns the phenomenal appearing which provides being, while nevertheless what appears is not given existence by the appearing since the latter is only unconcealment; thus there is no ontological dependency, there is no creation involved. The word of classical phenomenology *presents* a nomination by means of which that which it names is offered in pseudo-presence, as 'unbeing' (350). The absence of the world as named by the word is caused by the mode of appearing, by phenomenality, *on which language depends*. Presence is thus based in primary absence, on a principle of irreality, memory – what is always there but never present.

What this suggests, according to Henry, is room for a language different from the traditional phenomenological language of experience, and the presence of absence. Henry uses the word 'revelation' (351) for the appearing of 'life' – which is ultimately thought in terms of bodily being – and argues a dissociation of the two modes, and avoidance of the phenomenological reduction of all conceivable appearing to the appearing of the 'world'. Recall that Merleau-Ponty's critique of the language of classical phenomenology

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger in *On The Way To Language*, trans. P.D Hertz (New York: Harper's & Row) according to Henry's essay.

points out that the determination of objective Being, according to Husserlian intuition, gives the meaning of an object 'only as a systematic deformation of our universe of experience, without our ever being able to name its operative principle'. Merleau-Ponty's insight is that perceptual consciousness is 'indirect or inverted' with respect to the ideal of Husserlian adequation "which it presumes but never encounter directly"⁵². When Merleau-Ponty refers the expression made possible by language to an expression *revealed* in the 'archaeology of the perceived world', his themes converge with those of Henry.

When Henry speaks of *revelation* and the 'appearance' of life these terms indicate a dimension of manifestation irreducible to visibility and the gaze of thematic consciousness. The inverted commas reflect the paradox that this appearance is a non-appearance, strictly speaking; it refers to an affective dimension of subjectivity's self-manifestation. Henry argues a dissociation of two *modes of appearing*, that of the world of phenomena for consciousness and that of a different phenomenality, which concerns affective life. His argument is directed against the phenomenological reduction of all conceivable appearing to the appearing of the world: "The first feature of the *revelation* of the world is that it is a self-revelation" (PL 351), which avoiding tautology *involves* original and absolute generation. What is suggested is a conception of 'life' in terms of an experience of the affective dimension of subjectivity, an unfolding of affective life "[increasing] itself, enriching itself with its own substance by being submerged into it", as a virtual but real *process of immanence*, the infinite movement in which,

life comes to itself, pulls itself in against itself and plays with itself, *producing* its own *essence* insofar as this essence consists in and is complete in this self-enjoyment. Thus the process in which life reveals itself to itself is *identical with the process of its generation* insofar as this is understood as its self-generation (352).

⁵² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Themes from the Lectures*, 4.

Henry is here still considering the connection between appearing and language. What is clear at this point is that if the nature of language is dependent on the mode of appearing, then what is described here as a different phenomenalisation, “namely life itself grasped in its pure phenomenological essence as self-revelation (352), involves “*another language* than the language of the world, constructed out of noematic meanings designating only the irreality of the referents, in other words different from the language to which we generally limit the concept of language” (353). The essence of this new language is drawn from its mode of phenomenalisation as self-revelation without going via the difference of the world as the outside or visibility; it ‘speaks itself’. This may seem to be at odds with what Derrida says of language in *Speech and Phenomena*, but I believe there is only an apparent discrepancy between the two approaches to the language of phenomenology. Derrida would not disagree with the statement that “the way life reveals itself is the way it speaks” (353); what ‘material phenomenology’ discovers is a ‘Speech’, which is thus its own ‘verb’. Henry’s propositions concerning a material phenomenology concern precisely the resuscitation of a primordial signifying dimension, of a sensible from which thought emerges. That is, material phenomenology makes claim to what is named a ‘speech of life’ in the face of an assumed ‘impotence’ of what is designated as the ‘language of the world’; a self-affection, self-donation of self-generation which puts in question any notion of a general other⁵³, as it actualises itself as phenomenological material/ity. According to the methodological presuppositions of classical phenomenology ‘access’ to the ‘things themselves’ is defined by the appearing, or unconcealment: The distantiation implied here eludes anything but an other in general, a *generality* of the things ‘themselves’. Henry’s notion of affective manifestation points out that ‘a transcendental and pure affectivity’ is the phenomenological material *made reductive* by the methodology of classical phenomenology, the *pathos* which is thus also its possibility and *potential*, its mode of revelation. As in Gilles Deleuze, pathos indicates in Henry the *force* of affective being that constitutes the ‘relation between’ content and form. Content and form are thought according to reciprocal presupposition. Pathos makes

⁵³ This is an important implication of Deleuze’s notion of the relationship between virtual-actual, language and expression – that there is no other in general. See chapter one, n20.

the how of revelation become its content (353), the *content of form*, or an in-between of thought and materiality.

Henry's propositions amount to a renewal of the question of language; they attempt to move beyond a linguistic intentionality, which always already presupposes a negation and a concomitant loss. The specific connection of the question of language with the question of phenomenality suggested here – the appearing in which that which is spoken of is *made to be seen* – is what allows another speech to come into question; the 'speech of life' in which 'reality says itself' (352), in which beyond the difference and indifference where the world is other, what is spoken of involves at the same time the generation of subjectivity as inseparable from the speech: affectivity. Deleuze expresses a parallel line of thought in *Difference and Repetition*:

We do not contemplate ourselves, but we exist in contemplating – that is to say, in *contracting that from which we come*... [w]e must always first contemplate something else... in order to be filled with an image of ourselves⁵⁴.

The presupposition of a 'phenomenology of language' shows a relation, not only between language and a mode of phenomenalisation, but also between the two languages as proposed by a material phenomenology, and presumes a relationship between two modes of phenomenalisation, as their difference can only really be thought on the basis of the difference of the latter (357). According to Henry's argument, linguistic intentionality, as it *intends* transcendent meaning, can relate to such meaning only through an anteriority of sensible being thought in terms of a self-donation or pathos, "the epiphanies of our flesh" (355). Thus the making see of linguistic intentionality, is already the presupposition of the revelation of the self-affecting 'verb' – the latter devoid of intentionality and seeing. Intentionality is thus not foundational; the *founding relationship between the two languages* shows intentionality as produced. This is the important reorientation made by Henry's critique of the classical conception of intentionality. The determinations of a

⁵⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: The Athlone Press, 1994 [1964]), 74 – 75. My emphasis. Hereafter DR.

subject – object relation according to classical phenomenology are shown to be derived or secondary with respect to a prior self-affection indissociable from sensible being. The presupposition of a duplicity of appearing allows a differentiation between life's expressions as immanent to life on the one hand and, on the other hand, the intentionality of the relation of life and its noematic designations. This approach to the question of language and embodiment proposes that it is not language as we traditionally know it which gives 'access to' reality; it is not language as presented through classical phenomenology's transcendental reflection of the phenomenologically reduced meaning-sphere. Material phenomenology does not set out to uncover life by act-intentionality and object-manifestation. 'Life' adventing to itself is its own capacity, not something set in motion or revealed by philosophical reflection. "We are always already in life; always already life is given to us by giving us to ourselves in the *pathos* of our speech" (PL 364). Speech or language is, on this account, not understood metaphorically, but refers to this virtual but real dimension of affective unfolding, of "the pathetic flesh of our living corporeality" (361) for one. Henry's development of phenomenological material, sets out to "reduce the illusion of ordinary language in which the meaning delivered ...(whether... conceptual or practical) seem to come exclusively from the world and seem to find a sufficient explanation in the world" (361). That is, the reduction of world through Cartesian and phenomenological philosophy.

(b) Otherness and Self-Awareness; thinking the In-visible

Henry's critique of the 'ontological monism' of classical phenomenology, asks for a reconsideration of its project. Defined by its object – phenomenality – the 'project' of phenomenology is an investigation into the conditions of possibility for appearance or manifestation. Henry's radicalisation of phenomenology assigns to being – or rather sensible being – a mode of existence other than one determined by the visibility of 'the world'. There are other forms of manifestation than the "the visible"; according to Henry

this is what classical phenomenology failed to see. Henry's development from classical phenomenology attempts to take phenomenology beyond its focus on object manifestation and act-intentionality. Henry's critique aligns with Derrida's critique in his consideration of the condition for manifestation or appearance in terms of invisibility. Derrida argues that the condition of manifestation cannot be grasped in intuition. It eludes objectification by reflection, by vision. The condition is invisible in the sense that it eludes the transparency of Husserlian presence. However, the condition is not merely absent. According to Henry it is not a negation of manifestation, but something that manifests itself in a manner different from the visible. According to Derrida and Levinas, it must be thought in terms of a trace (or *arche-trace*), as a mode of existence or being which conditions visibility⁵⁵. The trace designates, in Derrida as well as Levinas, an anteriority with respect to the presence it is taken to be the trace of according to classical metaphysical thought. The investigation of such an anteriority is the focus of Henry's work, not as a negation of phenomenality. According to *The Essence of Manifestation*⁵⁶ it refers to a fundamental kind of manifestation of Being, the manifestation of the invisible, a 'phenomenon' in the sense of a 'revelation':

The manifestation of Being, far from being... a simple consequence of the methodological work of clarification of phenomenology, is rather its condition, as it is the condition of all possible manifestation of any being in general. The manifestation of Being, therefore, [realizes itself] ... in the 'already' of its primitive condition which, as such is absolute [...], as is the 'already' of this effective pure manifestation which makes all subsequent steps possible. Henceforth, Being manifests itself *prior to* all work of *clarification* (EM 137, my emphases).

Henry radicalises Husserl's *lifeworld*, by developing the concept in terms of originary *pathos*. *Pathos is the transcendental condition* for the manifestation of the world of

⁵⁵ See Jaques Derrida, "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy* and Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, trans. Richard Cohen and Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

⁵⁶ Hereafter EM.

phenomena according to representation and reference, reason and intentionality; it is the immanent anteriority of an original awareness. Intentionality is secondary *and illusory* with respect to the presumption of constitution. The notion of disclosure with respect to transcendent being is an illusory effect of the original pathos. For Henry, the *reduction* of the world is the reduction to this anteriority, the reduction of the *eidos* of transcendent being to the 'essence' of transcendental subjectivity, based in a positioning for and as affectivity. For Henry, the originary, the 'new', happens according to a life inseparable from the subjective body⁵⁷.

According to Henry, the problem with classical phenomenology is its claim to the self-transcendent nature of appearance, the monistic claim of manifestation as only *of – to*. The claim that appearance always involves a genitive and a dative is problematic. My argument is that it is problematic in so far as an appearance always refers to something different from itself *in a manner which instates the idea of a general other*; an appearance is always an appearance of something for someone, *in general*. Furthermore, according to classical phenomenology appearance can only be given as object appearance to the extent that it refers to other appearances. The implication of this approach is an idea of general consensus or commonsense – precisely what was thought avoided by the *return* to 'the things themselves' according to phenomenological methodology. This state of analysis has, according to Henry, left phenomenology with a dilemma regarding subjectivity. Should the appearance of subjectivity be considered along the same lines? To what extent can there be an appearance or manifestation of subjectivity? Can it be negotiated along the lines of the genitive-dative structure?

Henry conceives of an originary manifestation that cannot be thought of in terms of the transcendence, horizon or 'ecstasis' of object manifestation. The manifestation of Being, insofar as it can be said to belong to sensible being, is anterior to the work of clarification that posits the visibility of objects of the world; it eludes reflective thematisation. The pathos of Being is thought in terms of a force *of being*, an excess of sensible *Life* directed

⁵⁷ I will take up the development of Henry's thought on the subjective body in chapter three. His conception of the subjective body provides the means for an understanding of Levinas and Michaux's work, which is central to this work's thesis concerning the development of Husserlian phenomenology for affective reality and immanent genesis.

towards articulation or ontological conception, not conceptuality. Henry's attempt to redirect phenomenology towards a manifestation thought in terms of its invisibility is an attempt to direct it away from an analysis which effects an 'identity of thought and Being': the adequation pertaining to 'knowledge' as the "conception of a common Being of the subjectivity of the subject and the objectivity of the object" (94), in the sense that the latter is 'unconcealed' in a direct extension of the former. Henry's notion of subjectivity is, like Levinas's *Other*, thought in terms of an ontological dimension which eludes the possessive grasp of vision⁵⁸. Henry describes the invisible revelation or the self-manifestation of subjectivity in the following terms:

It is a 'phenomenon' in the sense of 'revelation'... The original ontological presence, which *eludes the general conditions of Being*, is that of the ego itself. The phenomenal Being of the ego is one with the original revelation which is accomplished in a sphere of radical immanence. The reality of the foundation rests upon the phenomenal character of the latter, but insofar as this characteristic flows from a... determined mode of revelation... the reality of the ontological possibility is the Being of the Ego (41, my emphasis).

The foundation is not something obscure, neither is it light which becomes perceivable only when it shines upon the thing which bathes in its light, nor is it the thing itself as a "transcendent phenomenon", but it is an immanent revelation which is a presence to *itself*, even though such a presence remains "invisible" (41, my emphasis).

Henry's critique of Heidegger's *On the Way to Language*, concerns the sense in which Heidegger's equivocation of 'originary truth' and the world as the "outside of itself" (348), ultimately implies a 'Being without beings'. The other kind of phenomenality,

⁵⁸ As will be taken up in chapter four, the point raised in Levinas's conception of the absolutely Other is that its significance is never exhausted according to a perception correlative to understanding; this is what he wants to say with his notion of the uncontainable or ungraspable aspect of the other person's *face*, as not 'of the world' determined by cognition or Husserlian intuition. Levinas's notion of 'face' refers to a different type of manifestation/conception of phenomenality, it is what reveals itself in an original 'expressivity'.

proposed by Henry, concerns a dimension of subjective being other than 'the visible', although described as the ego. What Henry suggests is an orientation of subjectivity for or according to *itself* as affectivity. The embodied positioning of subjective being is inseparable from its effectuation, its affectivity. The *excess* of sensible being is precisely what lends Being or meaning to being. The manifestation of subjectivity eludes reflective theorising; to this extent Henry characterises this lack of 'exteriority' as *invisible*. Material phenomenology attempts to think invisible affection and effectuation in terms of an absolute immanence of sensible being. Henry's notion of the invisible as originary manifestation puts in question the framework of classical phenomenology according to which Being is ultimately being object and from which non-presence is excluded as simple exteriority. Henry's thought aligns itself with Deleuze's on this point: in the suggestion of a radical immanence as a condition for thinking the emergence of subjectivity and sensible being. In Henry, the self-manifestation of subjectivity is understood as immediate, and as a passive event; this is what is meant here by *orientation* or positioning: an emergence in and according to sensible being. Henry states in *The Essence of Manifestation*:

Affectivity reveals the absolute in its totality because it is nothing other than its perfect adherence to self, nothing other than its coincidence with self, because it is the auto-affection of Being in the absolute unity of its radical immanence (858-59).

Appearance on the classical model, that is, according to the meaning of *phainomenon*, is inseparable from transcendence. To the extent that one may speak of an appearance of subjectivity, as a phenomenon of phenomenological analysis, one must think the manifestation of transcendental subjectivity. However, subjectivity as transcendental does not itself appear. Henry points to the impasse of classical phenomenology in that without manifestation there is no phenomenon for phenomenological analysis. That is, there is no transcendental phenomenology. Henry asks how the ecstatic act is grounded. The reflective methodology of phenomenological analysis is undermined by its ontological monism. According to Henry, the possibility of phenomenological analysis and ecstatic

act is based in an anterior dimension of self-manifestation, altogether different from object- manifestation. In other words, Henry's argument is that an adequate analysis of self-manifestation realises some foundation for the phenomenological project of an analysis of the condition of possibility for appearance or manifestation.

For Henry, self-manifestation or self-awareness involves not only a realisation of an I that acts; an anterior condition is awareness as the *process* of experiencing, in its interiority *or affectivity*. As this involves a clarification of the conditions under which subjectivity is aware of *itself* rather than a *self* in possession of experience, the question of self-awareness eludes the structures of consciousness. Henry suggests that subjectivity, as experience, is a 'revelation' to itself; there is a certain passivity involved, a given-ness of subjectivity inseparable from a notion of manifestation. The *experience* of an object is considered the very access to the object or its manifestation in so far as this experience is conceived in terms of affectivity, as well as the constitution of subjectivity, as self-awareness. Henry speaks of self-awareness in terms of a given-ness, a certain passivity of affective life. Renunciation of 'self' is thought in terms of the primacy of self-affection, and in terms of a distinction of affect and the mastery and 'exteriorisation' of knowledge and egoity on the classical account:

[I]n the internal structure of the original essence of revelation, interior to the original relationship of Being to itself, all domination, every faculty of acting or effecting, everything which habitually presents itself as the foundation... as an origin or a cause...all cease.

Like Levinas, Henry questions the conception of the autonomous ego through a notion of passivity and sensible affectivity. Selfhood is thought in terms of a sensible, embodied given-ness. For Henry, however, it is not the 'proximity of an Other'; self-affection is thought as the unfolding of an interiority.

Passivity could not designate, as Descartes wanted, the action of a foreign reality. it is the relation of Being to itself, to its own reality, not to a foreign reality which

is described and subsumed under the concept of passivity... Thus a radically incorrect, even though traditional, understanding is cast aside according to which passivity, within its own relationship, is necessarily extended to something other than itself which is imposed on it, given and 'with regard to which' it henceforth determines itself... (294)

This description of passivity seems to be diametrically opposite to Levinas's descriptions of passivity in the face of radical alterity. The manifestation of subjectivity is, in Henry, a *self-affecting*; however, a notion of affectivity cannot be exclusive of 'otherness'. In fact, Levinas as well as Henry makes the point that essential to responsiveness to alterity is the anteriority of a positioning of an interiority or affectivity, understood in a corporeal sense. The anteriority of affectivity is precisely an orientation toward the excess of sensible being⁵⁹. Henry's point is to delimit passivity not only with respect to act-intentionality and a notion of mastery, but with respect to an active relation to exteriority. Subjectivity and transcendent intentionality is based in a prior *emergence* of subjectivity thought in terms of an absolute immanence of sensible being. Like Levinas, Henry questions the limitation by which the *world* is the site of all manifestation.

An immanent revelation is an internal experience... An internal experience understood as an original revelation which is accomplished in a sphere of radical immanence exists by itself... without the support of any exterior and 'real' Being, *it is itself precisely an existence*, or better, existence itself... Such an existence owes nothing to transcendence, *rather it precedes it* and makes it possible⁶⁰. More original than the truth of Being is the truth of man (41, my emphasis).

⁵⁹ Levinas's elaboration of an affectivity in being is the subject of part 1 of chapter four. The point taken up is that of a sense, 'sens' or meaning inseparable from this corpo-reality conceived in terms of affectivity.

⁶⁰ This 'owing nothing to transcendence' may seem to go against the Levinasian emphasis on the awareness of transcendent being or the other. My discussion of Levinas in chapter four and five will make it clear that Henry's notion of the life of the subjective body is in fact presupposed in the Levinasian analysis of the relationship with transcendent being.

Henry emphasises the close connection between the engendering of a singular living self and Life, against the abstraction of life as a category separated from the generation of self. The 'original appearance' is in-visible: forces that manifest as affectivity. A logic of immanence according to a mode of revelation is what founds transcendence, thought emerging through an originary mode of revelation, an anterior responsiveness. Henry's analysis of self-manifestation is based in a certain 'logic of sensibility' if this notion is thought according to an affective *orientation* of subjectivity; the notion of self-awareness must be understood in terms of an opening up to sensible being *according to* subjectivity, but specifically the 'subjective body', which according to Henry is nothing other than subjectivity. My argument is that Henry's assertion that 'self-manifestation is the essence of all manifestation'⁶¹ must be understood in terms of sensible existence as a dynamic, which always already exceeds the life of consciousness and eidetic determination. In other words, Henry's notion of self-awareness is indissociable from affectivity or what Merleau-Ponty calls 'the sensible' and posits the in-visible or the non-conscious as anterior significations in the emergence of subjectivity.

Material phenomenology refutes the simple transparency of the Husserlian present. When Derrida argues that the living present "springs forth out of a non-identity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace" and that "the self of the primordial present is primordially a trace" (SP 85), he points to the invisibility of an anterior condition of presence. Henry's argument is as follows:

If the essence of the foundation hides itself in the very act whereby it opens a horizon of light, it is because it pertains in principle to this essence not to show itself. The essence is real insofar as it forms the basis for truth; nevertheless, it is in no way itself the truth, but rather a more original non-truth. However, it is to this non-truth that the phenomenon always refers itself insofar as the latter shines forth from the foundation of an *obscure* relationship. Ontology is still possible on a phenomenological basis. That which is in question, but in an essential manner

⁶¹ This statement contains the main thesis of his work, *The Essence of Manifestation*.

is simply the possibility of absolute knowledge.

The original revelation is its own content unto itself. The 'how' of this revelation is a real Being. This phenomenon, or rather this way of being a phenomenon which does not shine at all in the universal light, this *manner which is a concrete Being*, this is what [is] designated by the title of 'ego' (40, my emphases).

In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida defines *différance* according to what he terms the 'ultra-transcendental concept of life', that is, according to auto-affection (in general). Auto – or Self-affection is an anterior condition of immanence with respect to any formation of sense. *Différance*, as what conditions both the concepts of trace and presence as traditionally understood, is that anteriority or original tracing which constitutes self-presence, never itself present. For Derrida, auto-affection is temporal. While Henry does not conceive of self-affection in terms of a temporal self-givenness of consciousness, he does conceive of self-affection as a dynamic notion; the process of affection is a subjective movement in which the ego becomes aware of *itself* rather than a self. Henry conceives temporality in terms of affectivity, as absolutely immanent, thus neither according to retentional mediation, nor to a mediation of an outside. As in Derrida, however, the constitution of subjectivity is preceded and conditioned by a 'movement' anterior to presence of self. For Henry the original self-affection of experiencing subjectivity, while understood in terms of 'immediacy', is moreover a kind of original bodily sensibility, the body itself or 'subjective body', before it becomes an intentional object⁶². For neither Henry nor Derrida is self-presence understood as full or 'pure'. However, the anteriority of self-presence conceived by Derrida is understood in terms of a 'fracture' that for Henry would already involve an objectivation of a self, an act of subjectivity. Temporality in Henry is understood in relation to the notion of passivity bound up with the 'life of the subjective body'. The concept of self-affection is understood in terms of generation on the basis of the antecedence of the concept of Life. Self-revelation, as the revelation of Life, is not understood as a generality, but as singular

⁶² Michel Henry, *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975, p. 79. Hereafter referred to as PPB).

variation; the sense of self-affection is stripped of formal structure. It is not static and cannot be thought in figurative terms. Henry's account of self-affection must be understood along the lines of Levinas's notion of the 'Face' of the other. According to Levinas, the Other as such is not understood in terms of a worldly phenomenon on the classical account⁶³. It must be understood in non-figural terms: according to affectivity and 'emotion'. In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida describes subjectivity as an ideal form of presence. However, the point is that insofar as according to Derrida ideality is linguistically constituted, self-awareness is indissociable from language. The relationship between self-consciousness and language is this: "Since self-consciousness appears only in its relation to an object, whose presence it can keep and repeat, it is never perfectly foreign or anterior to the possibility of language" (SP 15). Derrida notes that this relationship will "introduce non presence and difference (mediation, signs, referral back, etc) in the heart of self-presence" (15). My argument is that Henry's self-awareness be understood less as self-consciousness than as emphasising an anterior self-affection of the body: "the ego is not a pure logical subject enclosed within its tautology" (PPB 92). I see this as the justification of Henry's notion of language; what is expressed in Henry's description of language is an idea of *revelation itself*. Self-awareness or self-consciousness is understood in Derrida as 'ideality'. On Henry's account, self-awareness is thought in terms of a sensibility accorded to bodily existence or affectivity. The critiques of Derrida and Henry point to the same "originally silent, 'pre-expressive' stratum of experience" (SP 15) which remains insufficiently accounted for in Husserlian phenomenology. What Derrida criticises regarding the place of indication in Husserl, is the exclusion of a dimension of sense in lived subjectivity, which Henry attempts to resuscitate to a position within expression; this is the sense of Henry's 'speech of life'. It is also what disrupts the purity of absolute presence on the Husserlian model.

Whereas according to both critiques 'the thing itself' is excluded to the extent that it eludes the grasp of intuitive consciousness, sensibility is the very emergence of thought. 'Sense', or sensibility, is what provokes thought. The critique of phenomenology in terms

⁶³ See especially *Totality and Infinity*.

of a notion of invisibility concerns, in Derrida as well as Henry, phenomenology's exclusion of the 'indicative' and significative aspect of lived subjectivity.

The impasse of classical phenomenology lies with a circle of reasoning in which the main points of reference are object-manifestation and act-intentionality:

Insofar as meaning, all possible meaning in general, is constituted by a consciousness, the question as to the meaning of existence moves in a circle as soon as what is thought under the term existence is in reality nothing other than consciousness... What becomes evident [is] that the original structure of existence defined as transcendence and intentionality does precisely no more than take over the structure of consciousness itself, traditionally understood as a relation to an object, as representation⁶⁴.

The act which appears as independent of its own forward movement, independently of the movement whereby it projects itself outside itself, reveals itself to itself, in such a way that this "in itself" means: without surpassing itself, without leaving itself... in its essence [...], immanence. Immanence is the original mode according to which is accomplished the *revelation of* transcendence itself and hence the original essence of revelation (EM 227, my emphasis).

Henry does not refute representational consciousness as such; rather he points to a certain anteriority of existence determined by affectivity. Henry's analyses of subjectivity do not refute alterity, an Other of subjectivity is there in every experience by subjectivity, conditioning experience: "[S]ubjectivity is always a life in the presence of a transcendent being" (PPB 187). Henry's argument is that the primary self-manifestation is an absolute condition with respect to all other manifestation, and this argument must be understood according to the notions of affectivity and the subjective body. Representation and exteriority in the classic determinations of knowledge, are not questioned as such, but

⁶⁴ Michel Henry quoted in Gary B. Madison, 1981 p. 272.

shown to be limited. *The Essence of Manifestation* points to the connection between 'life' and phenomenal manifestation⁶⁵. The notion of the 'speech of life' responds to this connection. Henry conceives of immanence as a condition for transcendence, but interiority and exteriority are not oppositional terms, or terms of correlation. Rather, Henry's conception of the self-manifestation of subjectivity shows how the subjectivist and objectifying determinations of knowledge put each other in question. Derrida notes, in *Speech and Phenomena*, "if [the] ultra-transcendental concept of life enables us to conceive life (in the ordinary or in the biological sense) and if it has never been inscribed in language, it requires another name" (SP 15). Henry cites Meister Eckhart: "The agent which makes us conscious of seeing should rank above the agent of vision itself"⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ See Michel Henry's elaboration of themes in Meister Eckhart in EM, pp. 424 – 37.

⁶⁶ Meister Eckhart quoted EM, p. 331.

Chapter Three

The Question of Immanent Genesis

As I have showed in the previous chapters, for Derrida the notion of the Living Present in Husserlian phenomenology necessitates delay. According to Derrida's *Introduction*, the Living Present's "auto-temporalisation" is bound up with inter-subjectivity, the "discursive and dialectical inter-subjectivity of Time with itself in the infinite multiplicity and infinite implication of its absolute origins" (IOG 152). While classical phenomenology is access to the consciousness of the living present, the problem lies with phenomenology's determination of ontology by its methodological presumptions¹. Derrida argues that "[B]eing itself must always already be given to thinking, in the presumption – which is also a resumption – of Method. And undoubtedly an access to being *and* being's advent must already be *contracted*, when phenomenology begins by claiming the right to speak" (152). Phenomenology starts from a given, the access to which is presumed to be language conceived as a logic. This is because phenomenology starts with a 'being of thought' which is necessarily delayed with respect to an always already past present, that is, an other origin/ary. The living present's self-identity is already other. What Derrida highlights is that difference is thus a condition for (self)-presence. That is to say, an already constituted or another origin always already informs the living present as the possibility of appearance or manifestation. When Derrida then infers that "Difference would be transcendental" (153), he effectively suggests that a genesis must be accounted for which is not a genesis *from* the transcendental consciousness of the living present.

My argument with respect to Merleau-Ponty is that genesis in his analyses is still a genesis *from*, according to his notion of *flesh*. This means that the displacement made by

¹ See chapter one.

his elaboration of an operative intentionality of B/being, is as all encompassing an abstraction as determination by transcendental consciousness. The absolute generality implied by Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh works to obscure any singular emergence, or any *genesis outside* this generality. His notion of the 'total situation', as the temporal *sensibility* that produces subjectivity, points to the difference and genesis of bodily being. However, this genesis is all encompassing, the 'Nullpunkt' of all sensible *and* intelligible genesis. Merleau-Ponty's analyses can only *approach* what I see as a central point Derrida makes in his reading of Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation.

Derrida's critique of Husserl's Fifth Cartesian Meditation – which concerns the question of inter-subjectivity – highlights the fact that I as my-self cannot have presentation or *Gegenwärtigung* of an other's lived experience. There is only *Vergegenwärtigung* or representation. The instability of the living present is precisely the retention or representation of another origin/ary. I say "originary" because the interruption by retention of what is supposedly mine not only affects, but necessarily *effects*, my Self. Retention and protention are conceived by Derrida as the announcement of an emergence of being and a non-identity at the heart of self-identity and so productive of Being. In fact, this non-identity is a condition for the emergence of self-'identity': self-presence is never pure. This is the point that Derrida makes with respect to the impossibility of reaching the object without passing via the sedimentations of culture. Delay is the irrevocable necessity in any situation of presence that makes any structure of 'genesis *from*' incomplete. Retention is an irreducible part of experience, which means that the origin has always already disappeared. When Derrida speaks of a "polemical unity of disappearing and appearing" (IOG 152), he suggests that the origin always already escapes the present. This is because the origin/ary 'is difference'. Derrida starts with a separation. Difference is transcendental. This reconception of the transcendental poses the question of genesis with regard to an anteriority of the beginnings of classical phenomenology. The origin is a certain absence, and this becomes obvious with regard to the phenomenological analyses.

The origin/ary must on account of this critique be said to be in excess of transcendental consciousness and its determinations. Because Husserl's transcendental consciousness reduces mind to the intellection of cognition, at least according to the methodological *analysis*, it remains transcendent with regard to what is in excess of it. Husserl reduces this excess to refractory categories of cognitive determinations. The excess is lost because not graspable according to consciousness as a transcendent instance in the self-presence of its being. The Derridean terms, contamination and *différance*, affirm alterity as origin/ary, anterior to the methodological determinations of Husserlian phenomenology.

Derrida says of alterity in "Violence and Metaphysics" that it must be understood in terms of the indefinite: "The infinitely other would not be what it is, other, if it was [just]² a positive infinity, and if it did not maintain within itself the negativity of the indefinite, of the *apeiron*"³. Derrida speaks here of *différance*, impure difference and a negativity bound up with alterity. Derrida speaks of an "indestructible and unforeseeable resource of the Greek *logos*" as "some unlimited power of envelopment by which he that attempts to repel it would always already be *overtaken*" (112). Derrida's insight is that an experience cannot be maintained in the purity of the form of the living present. In "Violence and Metaphysics" he expresses this again in terms of the openness of the Idea in the Kantian sense, the idea of the infinite as it

designates the infinite overflowing of a horizon which, by reason of an absolute and essential necessity which itself is absolutely principal and irreducible, never can become an object itself, or be fulfilled, equaled, by the intuition of an object" (120).

There is always already excess with respect to intuition as the form(alisation) of the living present. Derrida's notion of necessary impossibility suggests a genesis

² I insert "just" here because Derrida does not refute the notion of a positive infinite as such – as the condition of ideality the movement to infinity is positive.

³ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 114. See also p. 119.

unaccountable for by Husserlian intuition. Meaning-bestowal through intentionality or intuition is already informed by the content in excess of it; content is always already in form. The 'necessity' of Derrida's notion is "violence itself"⁴. The question of the other, or the recognition of genesis in terms of impure difference, is inseparable from the necessity of violence: "Being is necessarily dissimulated" (149) in me as my self. The question of genesis or origin in "Violence" is related to a notion of infinity – or God:

The ontic content of infinity would destroy ontic closure . Implicitly or not, the thought of infinity would open the question, and the ontico-ontological difference. Paradoxically, it would be this thought of infinity (what is called the thought of God) which would permit one to affirm the priority of ontology over theology, and to affirm the priority of theology over ontology, and to affirm that the thought of being is presupposed by the thought of God (150).

Derrida's 'ultra-transcendental concept of life' refers to that which is necessarily both univocal and equivocal. Univocity is necessary to allow 'access' to meaning. However, the equivocal, which informs all generation of meaning, the difference at the root of genesis, disrupts this necessary unity. Transferred to the thought of God quoted above, this means that univocally, God would be immanent to man; equivocally God is transcendent. Infinite alterity opens up the question of the originary *différance*, of the transcendent instance – being – and existence as being-in-the-world. The elaborations of this double necessity in Derrida allow me to ask the question of an immanent genesis. Can there be immanent genesis? That is, can the question of genesis be posed outside epistemology – or the parameters of the intellect in cognition? Must the question be posed outside T/thought?

According to Michel Henry, whose elaboration of phenomenological themes is based in a notion of radical immanence, the answer to the first two of the three questions is obviously 'yes'. Regarding the last question, Henry operates with a notion of

⁴ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 128. See also p. 133.

forgetfulness, which effectively suggests that immanent genesis, as well as its question, is an irreducible presupposition and condition of thought. Henry suggests that immanent genesis as such is the origin which has always already disappeared from view, *so to speak*. That is, an origin/ary is effaced from view and from the philosophical discourse. What Henry recognises, and what becomes obvious with the analyses of Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, is the necessity of the problem that once being is posited, once we say that there is being, then it is already lost as posited. Once the determinations of subject and object have ‘appeared’, the meaning is lost, because this meaning eludes our cognitive grasp. The question of being as also the being of the question in subjective being is implicitly reformulated in these works in the following manner: Can there be a genesis of immanence beyond epistemology? Can we think an immanent genesis beyond T/thought? Can we think immanent genesis in terms of a sensible in excess of rational intellection and the doctrine of constitution?

I. Michel Henry: the Excess of Life over and against the Theory of Thought

Henry argues, in *The Essence of Manifestation*, that “[i]mmanence is the originary mode according to which is accomplished the revelation of transcendence and hence the originary essence of revelation” (EM 197). Henry attributes a fundamental passivity to subjective experience, one that conditions and eludes the phenomenal act and designates affectivity as the essence of phenomenal *Life*. In the face of the presumptions of representational knowledge, he delineates an emergence of thought from the sensible. With this, he indicates a rethinking of the notions of reference and representation. My argument is that the implication set by the priority of affectivity is that sensible life is in excess of rational thought. Henry names this excess *pathos*. Affective reality is Henry’s designation of an invisible as what “determines the essence of immanence and constitutes it” (441). To the extent that immanence is understood in terms of affectivity Henry’s

thought does not disagree with Derrida's insight that alterity – a significative effectuation – is always already there, as non-presence insofar as non-presence is understood as non-intuition, refusing the eidetic priority of theoretical knowledge.

Raising the question of whether or what forms of culture may be considered to be languages on this account Henry considers the manner in which painting shows “not things, but their emergence, their abolition in this emergence itself” (PL 362). Henry recognises that art opens up thought to the immanence of a genesis beyond cognition. Art is not about information and communication but opens up the register in which language is left *to be* equivocal. Henry attributes to Kandinsky the intuition that “[b]ecause every speech is also and first that of Life, painting must paint the invisible” (362); the phenomenological material of color and form is “drawn from ‘life’ by way of pure impression (the color spread across the *object*, the ‘noematic color’, being only the pure impression’s projection). Form therefore has a *site in life* like color, inasmuch as a form is nothing but the *outline of a force*; it draws from life the pathetic dynamism without which there is neither force nor form” (363, my emphases). According to Henry’s ‘radicalisation’ of the *Lebenswelt*, the “original reality” of phenomenological material is the “*impressional self-revelation* in the pathos of life” (363, my emphasis). The Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, means revealing and concealing. Henry insists on this duplicity of appearing in terms of a double *articulation*⁵ of being; he redirects the question of being, as the meaning of being, beyond ontological monism, to an originary revelation according to affectivity. Revelation according to affectivity is what he terms *Life* rather than ‘being’. Henry’s motivation in introducing this term is to differentiate the term from “being”, in so far as the latter notion is (with ontological monism) reduced to a ‘being of thought’: that is, presence and appearance according to the vision afforded by the transparency of phenomenological language and its abstract, general and universalisable notions of subjective acts.

⁵ This articulation, as it refers to Henry’s notion of language understood in a broad sense, is closer to the notion of expression, as Deleuze employs the term. I will take up this point later in the section on Deleuze in this chapter.

If embodied existence is characterised by a certain opacity, it is so, according to Henry, because of an essential obscurity with respect to transcendence: "Being is what it is in the sense that Being signifies the *original immanent relation of self in unity*" (297). In the context of a discussion of Merleau-Ponty⁶, Henry states: "It is because the foundation of exteriority maintains itself outside exteriority and does not manifest itself in it that consciousness wherein the foundation resides is said to be 'obscure' and not to show itself" (389).

Thought is transcendence, directed at an outside of self; the essence generated outside T/thought's exteriority eludes thought. That is to say: "Because thought, while aiming at exteriority, fails in principle to achieve the essence which maintains itself outside exteriority, it denies it" (386): it 'denies' immanence. "What essential determination other than the movement toward the outside, an outside which is its own, could thought recognize and name? [...] We must reject the naïve representation of a knowledge, first enclosed in the subject and hence restricted to 'leaving' its so-called interior sphere in order, outside of this sphere, to reach the object" (386). As Derrida has pointed out, this is the problem with intentionality conceived according to the stability of the living present in intuition. The presumption is that consciousness is self-enclosed, but can exit this self-enclosure and 'reach the object' through an act of cognition. Henry, like Derrida, recognises the 'necessary impossibility' of the departure from self according to a pure consciousness that achieves knowledge. In the context of Heidegger's thought, Henry speaks of this relation to immanence in terms of an ontological "forgetfulness of [its] essence" (385):

Ontological monism is the theory of thought. That monism surpasses thought toward its conditions, toward intuition and ultimately toward the ecstatic transcendence of a horizon, does this not show that it actually moves constantly in the direction prescribed by itself and by its objective? ... Because the remembering of Being takes place in thought and aims at its object by means of thought, this remembering actually repeats with respect to the original

⁶ The discussion concerns Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*.

immanence, the forgetfulness of naïve consciousness and makes of this forgetfulness an absolute. Thus, in thought, the forgetfulness of the essence cannot change into its contrary, because its contrary is rather identical to it (385, my emphasis).

Henry's argument is that classical phenomenology or "thought" "...bears within itself the essence that it denies" (387). When Henry suggests that ontological monism or classical phenomenology is the "theory of thought", what he says is that T/hought⁷ denies its imbrication with conditions other than the purity of its self-presence and a logical language that supports this presence. According to this criticism, Being and Knowing cannot be understood in terms of an interlacing, or according to a transparency in which meaning is accessed as something given by the intellectual capacity of thought or the thinking subject. What Henry criticises through these characterisations of 'ontological monism' is an abstraction in which thought determines life according to the language of cognition. Henry's important insight is that the positing of Being through such abstraction is forgetful of the excess of sensible life, which is always already a condition of thought. Henry's is a critique of the impossible abstraction in phenomenology's use of consciousness according to transcendental 'genesis *from*'. Husserl's transcendental consciousness is transcendent in a manner that presupposes an impossible abstraction from the world of which it is part. The abstraction of this genesis is 'impossible' because of its exclusion of its own conditions, its inability to account for its own conditions of manifestation. In the "incapacity of transcendence to assure itself of the possibility of its own manifestation... there also comes to light the impossibility for transcendence to lay its own foundation and thus to constitute the [Being] of the foundation. In such an impossibility resides the *abstract character* of the essence of manifestation interior to the ontological presuppositions of monism" (210-11, my emphasis).

⁷ I will use the term 'T/thought' throughout this chapter when I want to emphasise that the comments and criticisms regarding thought also pertain to a certain tradition of philosophy and its presumptions regarding its own discourse and what thought does. In Deleuze's thought this is an important point with regard to his contention that the development of philosophical thought should concern itself with what thought can do rather than what it is.

Henry's critique determines the abstract character of what is foundational in the presuppositions of ontological monism, as the reason for the "setback" regarding the determination of "the uttermost possibility of manifestation in its very generality" (211). The interlacing of being and knowing through an abstraction – which also occurs with Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh – seeks an adequation that can never be complete. Subjective as well as operative intentionality are both elaborations of the Platonic attempt at adequation, in which Being is 'knowing', or thought. Both Henry and Derrida's analyses support the Levinasian insight that thought is more than identification, as there are conditions of its own manifestation that are other than thought, and that may not be synthesised through the latter's abstractions and acts of meaning-bestowal. The critiques of Henry, Derrida and Levinas are directed at the abstractions of this phenomenological process of identification and synthesis: that is, phenomenological representation. Husserl's ultimate source of meaning is the representational core of consciousness. This is problematic in so far as representational consciousness necessarily has a presumed transparency to it. According to Henry's analyses this transparency is the consequence of an abstraction and the exclusion of non-theoretical areas of signification. This is what he means by describing 'ontological monism as the 'theory of thought'. Of course, non-theoretical areas of signification are accounted for through Husserl's broaching of operative intentionality, time-consciousness and passive synthesis; but as long as the core of consciousness is determined as the meaning bestowing activity of representational consciousness, what informs this consciousness is never really accounted for outside its theoretical determination.

These objections to Husserlian transcendental phenomenology are all very Levinasian, but Henry's points of contention regarding ontological monism concur with Levinas's here. Classical phenomenology calls for a performance of thought. This means that a certain work of thought becomes the theoretical manifestation of its determinations. The 'determinations' of classical phenomenology are based on the irreducibility of the link between intuition and intentionality, self-evidence and representation. The ultimate guarantor of this constellation, the guarantor with regard to the production of truth, is the relative transparency and maintenance of a purity regarding thought in the living present.

However, the 'theory of thought' is based in a necessary forgetfulness of the conditions of its own immanence and transcendent position. The abstractions of this thought suppose self-evidence as the possibility that the mental act is originary with respect to what is other. Such abstraction thus effaces an anteriority that is origin/ary with respect to the phenomenological beginnings. What Henry, Derrida and Levinas call for is responsiveness to this anteriority. This anteriority cannot be reached, only inadequately approached, by the reductions of phenomenology.

(a) Body as *Life* in Henry: refiguring the transcendental

According to Henry 'ecstatic' phenomenology is not sufficiently grounded. The act of transcendence is supposed without recognition of the anteriority of a mode of manifestation – what Henry calls revelation – characterising the life of the subjective body. This revelation must be understood in terms of receptivity, which is originary with regard to the movement of transcendence. Henry's concept of *Life* refers to the manifestation of *affectivity* according to the subjective body; immanence thus determines the essence of this 'manifestation', as a mode of givenness. This context of immanence opens the question of forgetfulness. Henry attributes an internal coherence to the life of the subjective body. According to its mode of givenness as singularity, the subjective body is a name for immanence as the *potential* of lived being or affectivity that prompts thought as one of its actualisations. Immanence is, for Henry, that by which transcendence is explained, a mode of givenness or affectivity, as the real meaning of human bodily being⁸. Henry's analyses criticise the extent to which the meaning of being

⁸ Henry poses the questions of the meaning of being in terms of bodily being, in terms of a *how* of the *life* of the body-subject. This life is anterior to the determinations of transcendence, and must be thought of in terms of affectivity. In this manner, immanence is the essence of transcendence. See EM 261. Henry's analysis of forgetfulness determines the emergence of thought according to a positioning for, or as, affectivity. The affectivity which is inseparable from the life of the subjective body is originary with respect to thought. I take this to be the main insight of Henry's work, and it links his thought to Deleuze

as being-object in classical phenomenology is forgetful of the concrete *life* or anteriority of the living body. The essence of manifestation is not an object in the world. Real genesis, according to Henry, is necessarily hidden. Henry's notion of immanence breaks with the adequation of being and knowing in which being is being-object. The immanence of affective life is understood in terms of revelation because its being is irreducible to being-object, to the manifestation of objectivity for consciousness. Henry comments on the necessary incompleteness of the phenomenological reduction and the forgetfulness of the movement of transcendence:

[T]he reduction, because it in no way allows its origin to appear in thought as a 'motif', henceforth appears without foundation, and is, according to the well-known statement of Fink, "unmotivated", Nevertheless that the reduction should take place and...the phenomenologist ask...the question of its possibility and of its origin "... reside in the *depth* of transcendental subjectivity... *which we truly are without knowing it*", [this] *re-membering bears in itself and for itself, as certain signs of its positivity, the signs of forgetfulness which it accomplishes...*(392)

According to Henry's assessment of forgetfulness with regard to ontological monism, the intervention in existential philosophy of this concept "and the clarification of its positive meaning... as attested to by the idea of a re-membering, immanence is rather *presupposed by [this philosophy] as what makes this forgetfulness possible and determines it, as that which hides itself*" (392, my emphasis). According to Henry, the definition of existence by existential philosophy implies what it denies: "immanence is its conscious presupposition" (391). The idea of a 're-membering' or restoration makes the point that something is lost or denied in object oriented thinking; as the basis of knowledge is presumed in the purity of consciousness, the existence of the subjective body is denied in 'de-membered' conscious intellection. Henry argues that "[b]ecause according to the philosophy of existence, consciousness forgets its own phenomena, 'it

and Levinas's, especially, as they point to an inadequately recognised *sensibility* which informs thought and is inseparable from embodied being.

can recall them'... [and] this notion of a possible and necessary re-membering, attests to... the reality of what it denies" (391):

...[B]orn and developing in object-oriented thinking, at the very core of its movement toward the object and of the grasp which it effects, the feeling that this grasp, and this by reason of the direction which is peculiar to it, is in no way exhaustive; something in the grasp is lost, something essential which must be recovered (391).

[As] thought restricts itself in an exclusive manner to the movement of consciousness toward the world in the examination of its constitutive problems and that the explanation of this world and of its typical structures is itself pursued in conformity to the *telos* of intentionality and according to the mode of unveiling which belongs to it and characterizes it... the re-membering still moves about forgetful of the essence (392).

However, according to the argument here, this is "determined" by the immanence of the essence: "In this way *the question of its possibility and its origin*, which the *époché* poses with regard to itself becomes apparent. Because this possibility resides ultimately in the original immanence of transcendental life, thought which looks for this possibility in the world does not find it" (392). The forgetfulness is of the life of the subjective body, the 'recovery' cannot be directed to 'the world of objects', thought's own horizon or intention. Henry's point is this: "that the loss of the essence results in object-oriented thinking from *its* direction and not from the finitude of a content surrounded by horizons is attested to by the character of re-*membering*" (391,my emphases)⁹.

The positive phenomenological determination of immanence explains the status of existence interior to the philosophy which takes the latter and its 'obscurity', the obscurity of existence itself, as its theme (392).

⁹ The latter emphasis of course refers to the material dimension of the *life* of the subjective body.

Henry points out that there is, within this philosophy, a realisation that this obscurity “should be that of the essence and constitute its most notable phenomenological characteristic” (392-3). Proceeding to quote passages from Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* concerning the latent knowledge of the body, he concludes that the “original mode of revelation” of the body nevertheless becomes here nothing more than a “marginal phenomenon of this consciousness, the simple companion of the perceptive act, its repercussions and backwash in sensibility” and thus do not sufficiently take into account the relation of consciousness and the perceptive act to “the immanence of the essence which is the foundation of [the] obscurity” (394). Henry finds the “presentiment of immanence, at the very core of its negation and forgetfulness” (394) to be “recognisable” not only in the existential versions of classical philosophy, but finds that in phenomenology overall,

[a]longside the determination of reality beginning with objectivity wherein reality concretizes itself phenomenally, is juxtaposed the idea of that which rather does not manifest itself in this objectivity. Such an element, non-objective in principle, is not thereby nothing, but rather the condition of objectivity itself (394).

This passage contains the gist of Henry’s argument relevant to the question of immanent genesis. Genesis, conditioned firstly by the life of the subjective body, understood in its *movement* or “*sui generis*” (PPB 54-55), is immanent insofar as it eludes theoretical consciousness and its determination of objects of thought¹⁰.

This element, the ‘*sui generis*’ of the subjective body, is maintained “outside of objectivity in the very act whereby it constitutes its foundation, [and] determines positively the ‘obscurity’” (394) which defines the essence of immanent life. This is the meaning of the “duplicity of appearance” with regard to the affectivity of self-manifestation. Forgetfulness, which is part of egoic subjectivity, is then already

¹⁰ Based in great degree on Maine de Biran’s analyses of the body, the argument raised by Henry’s conception of the subjective body is that the place of ‘real movement’ takes place according to the body. As opposed to the Cartesian conception of the body, “it defines the real body and not the idea of the body, as a subjective and transcendental being” or an ‘original sphere of existence’ (PPB 57).

determined by the indication of the immanence it denies. Immanent life indicates in transcendence the excess of affectivity. Henry's argument is that as irreducible to transcendental consciousness, the 'immanence of the essence' refers to an anteriority of this consciousness, which is no less than origin/ary with respect to the phenomenological mind.

Henry's analyses in *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body* (1975) determine how an ontological theory of the subjective body is a condition for resuscitating within thought a certain "reality" pertaining to the concept of subjectivity. According to Henry, this reality is lacking in the descriptions of classical phenomenology (PPB 186). Henry is concerned to resuscitate a philosophy of subjectivity outside the intellectualism and abstractions of the phenomenological preference for representational consciousness. His claim is that the description of subjectivity as transcendental is only a residue remaining after T/thought, as the theory of thought, has reduced the subject through its abstractions and "flight from reality" (186). Henry criticises the notion of subjectivity effected through traditional phenomenological tenets, "its *projection* into the element of transcendent being" (186, my emphasis):

That subjectivity cannot be confused with the pure universal and empty milieu which floats around in representation, this results immediately from the fact that subjectivity is nothing transcendent. That which characterises subjectivity from an eidetic point of view is rather the fact that it is *a life* in a sphere of absolute immanence, that it is life itself. The abstract is transcendent. The transcendent element is a dead element which must be maintained in life by something more concrete than it, for to maintain in life that which is dead is, as Hegel says, "that which requires the greatest force." Moreover, *that which maintains in life is life itself, not understanding*, but the effective life of absolute subjectivity in all its forms, *viz. the body* as well and, in a general way, that which ordinary language also calls life... Can the concrete character of absolute subjectivity be doubted if it welcomes within it, as its most profound determinations, the intentionalities which together comprise our bodily life? (186, my emphases).

Henry is concerned with ontology to the extent that it is a manner of approaching the problem of the body. That is, the ontological analysis of subjectivity in terms of an absolute life of the body suggests a notion of *Life* that properly admits the concrete, singular being of bodily subjectivity. Henry points out that an original and originary being of bodily subjectivity is anterior to the noetic-noematic correlation. *The body as such* cannot be said to be a product of constitution by consciousness. Rather bodily subjectivity is originary with respect to the life of consciousness. The body is always already the *subjective body*. Subjectivity cannot be abstracted – in the theoretical terms of thought – from concrete subjective being as the *life* of the body. Thus the question of the body is not that of subjectivity becoming aware of its body. The life of the body in-forms subjectivity: it is the necessary content of the form of subjectivity, what I referred to earlier as the ‘otherness of self-awareness’, which is thus consequent of the “absolute immanence of the body” (58). This otherness must be designated, according to the broader argument of Henry’s analyses, as what has not been understood to any real extent by phenomenology. The life of the body can be described as the real body of T/thought. For Henry, bodily experience *is* the structure of absolute subjectivity and as such a singularity of Life, an original revelation. This gives a different meaning to Merleau-Ponty’s “I am my body”. In Henry this refers to an anteriority of reflective thought, but not the presence of all-encompassing flesh. This is important for thinking immanent genesis. The relation of body and subjectivity is both univocal and equivocal. Univocity refers to a surging forth of immanent being. However, because subjectivity is always *life* in the presence of a transcendent being its emergence is effected through this presence of Alterity. When Henry says that subjectivity is “always a life in the presence of a transcendent being” (187), this is not a contradiction of his descriptions of absolute subjectivity or bodily immanence. The point for him, and this is the reason why his analyses are relevant to the question of immanent genesis, is to account for subjectivity differently than the abstractions of classical phenomenology that reduce it to an empty form. Henry’s insight is that subjectivity, *as bodily subjectivity*, “*already* has a content... is an original content, viz. that of internal transcendental experience *as such* (187, my emphases added to Henry’s). It is this *content of form* Henry refers to when he speaks of

Life, and the density of sensible being in excess of the understanding or of rational thought. The singularity of the living body is, according to Henry's analyses, "a real element in the effectiveness of being", and thus in excess of the abstractions of classical phenomenology which reduced its being to being-object, as "belonging to the ontological milieu of being in general" (188).

This being in general refers to what the previous two chapters of this work designated as the inability to account for the concrete singularity of what is other to consciousness's thematic determinations. Henry permits an important addition to this 'ontological insufficiency'. His analyses add that the insufficiency of the determination of otherness in terms of a thematic generality is a consequence of a mis-recognition of bodily being. This mis-recognition is the necessary failure to grasp the body in its self-revelation. The subjective body is a condition for the emergence of subjectivity. However, the self-revelation that is the life of the body necessarily eludes constitution by the understanding; it thus eludes the conceptualisations of Thought. What we designate here as thought works through a certain presumption that conceptualisation is a certain abstraction, generalisation and universalisation of concepts. Gilles Deleuze takes up this critique of the formalisation involved in such use of the concept: it leads to a mis-recognition in which the concepts prove 'too general or too large for the real'¹¹. Ontological monism, according to Henry, fails to "raise" itself even to the "*idea* of the subjective body" (188). Thought, as the theory of thought, operates with a notion of absolute knowledge, which does not escape a presumption of adequation with respect to Being and Knowledge. The body conceived according to its own revelation, or its own transcendental content informing subjectivity, disrupts the idea of an absolute knowledge according to a pure consciousness of the living present. The content of the body – its revelation according to subjective life – is "irreducible to any transcendent content" (188).

¹¹ See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone 1994 [1968]), p. 68. I will take up Deleuze's critique and alternative philosophy with respect to such mis-conceptualisation in part three of this chapter.

Immanent genesis, as genesis of the subjective body – in the presence of transcendent being, but irreducible to it – is not genesis *from*. Immanent genesis is understood here through an analysis of the ontological being of the subjective body. The transcendental subjective body cannot be reduced to transcendent content according to the generality of objective being. The generation of a content of form (the subjective body) refers to a possibility of absolute knowledge in so far as this refers not to knowledge of and according to pure consciousness, but to an anteriority of a content always already informing consciousness. That is, the life of the body as immanent genesis prompts thought. This *Life*¹² is necessarily in excess of phenomenological determination on the classical account. Again in Henry, we find the Derridean insight that phenomenological beginnings are always delayed. The anteriority that is forgotten always already informs the abstractions and disrupts the presumption of purity in the living present.

The insight of Henry's critique of 'ontological monism' is that the presuppositions of transcendence in fact show that the transcendent subject must be affected by something outside itself; there must be a condition for transcendence. This is what he terms immanence or the movement of the subjective body. Thus the question raised is how transcendence is affected – and *effected*, this is the central insight made here – by an anterior 'givenness' or indication of 'objects', as sensibility, signification *by the body*¹³. There are no original 'objects of thought'. As the originary anteriority, or the ontological possibility of transcendent thought, immanence is "transcendental" (EM 260). Transcendence, as the supposed departure from self, is effectively put in question by the

¹² In Henry this *Life*, its revelation to itself, is given the name of God as The Essence. The revelation of Life to itself (EM 295) must be considered in terms of the attempt to designate a movement of the Infinite, as that which eludes the intellection of cognition regarding determinations in transcendence. My consideration of Henry regarding immanent genesis, regards the analyses to the extent that they show the limit of act-intentionality and object-manifestation. Genesis can be thought beyond these, in terms of the immanence of affectivity in a corporeal sense.

¹³ As I read Henry on this relation of transcendence to immanence, it is the understanding of the anteriority of immanence as inseparable from the affections of the subjective body that makes the departure from self-presence on the Husserlian account. Immanence, although *The Essence of Manifestation* refers to it as revelation of the Absolute (EM 307), is thus different from the presence presumed maintainable according to classical phenomenology's determinations by transcendence. Immanence is never pure. Otherness, as the *life* of the subjective body, is presence *attuned* to affectivity, i.e the presence of alterity. This positioning of the subjective body for or as affectivity, gives an account of corporeality that supports a notion of immanent genesis. That is, genesis not reducible to the cognitive subject or categories of the 'world'.

immanent life of the subjective body. Immanence, and immanent genesis, is its impossible presupposition, and informs a necessary forgetfulness in T/hought.

II. Questioning the ‘Other Husserl’: Genesis and Language

When I pose the question of an immanent genesis, it is prompted by the lack – the reduction – in classical phenomenology of a sufficient account of origins of meaning beyond acts of consciousness. I consider transcendental phenomenology, based on what Fink designated as act-intentionality and object-manifestation, to be limited on account of a reduction of the notions of genesis and language. Donn Welton’s study of Husserl, *The Origins of Meaning: A Critical Study of the Thresholds of Husserlian Phenomenology* (1983)¹⁴, attempts to defend Husserl with respect to criticism regarding the notions of perception and language in his phenomenology. Welton makes a case for the so-called “other” Husserl that Derrida’s analyses also recognise. His approach is a consideration of Husserl’s later forays into the genetic analysis of meaning, with regard to its effect on the relation between perception and speech. Welton takes up the point that the later genetic analyses tend to modify the static analysis in which meaning is invariably considered in terms of a logical determination, or methodological inevitability. He points to the Husserl that Derrida finds in the Inner Time-Consciousness lectures, to determine that for the later Husserl consciousness is “above all” (OM 3) process rather than collection of mental elements. There is recognition in the later Husserl that thought is accomplished “from the outset” (4) as linguistic; and genetic analysis shows that speech and perception “give birth to each other and opens the door to a description of the interaction of our linguistic manner of intending objects with the modes of their presence in perceptual fulfillment, i.e to an analysis of what we will call the dialectic of meaning and sense” (4).

¹⁴ Donn Welton, *The Origins of Meaning: A Critical Study of the Thresholds of Husserlian Phenomenology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983). Hereafter referred to as OM.

Welton's consideration of this relationship is bound by a delimitation of 'language' as 'speech-acts'. Apart from Welton's recognition that the turn in Husserl to genetic analysis does not really change much with regard to his theory of language – i.e language is not productive, but repeats the insights of intuition by "'lifting' the noematic sense (or core) into the domain of 'logos' (270, quoting Husserl from *Ideen 1*, 350) – the notion of language investigated remains reduced. The point emphasised in Derrida, Merleau-Ponty and Henry is that language exceeds speech acts. The signification of language in a broad sense must be taken into consideration in regard to the question of genesis. The signification of language and the question of the origin of meaning must be 'lifted' outside the relationship between speech and perception. The focus of analyses that remain with the latter delimitation of language, consider it according to its logical function only. The signification of language understood in a broader sense is always in excess of its *usage* as *medium* of communication. The effects of signification are inseparable from the affections of the subjective body, and irreducible to the speech-acts *correlative* to perception. Husserl's genetic analyses of sense-formation move beyond the strict sense of 'sense posited' by judgments of consciousness – in the *Investigations* and *Ideas 1* particularly – to sense formation according to the 'context of its horizons'. However, the dative of the latter expression clearly shows the delimitation in a double sense. Firstly, meaning is established according to an appearance for consciousness, and in relation to other appearances. Secondly, meaning is determined by an act of consciousness, on the basis of other determinations of consciousness. The introduction of the temporal horizon in the *Lectures on Inner Time- Consciousness* puts in question the adequation presumed in meaning intention and its fulfillment, but as Derrida has shown, there is a contradiction between Husserl's paragraph 16 and 17 here¹⁵. Husserl does not resign the notion of the fulfilment of meaning in the presence to consciousness in the *Erlebnis*¹⁶. His elaborations of passive synthesis recognise the import of the temporal horizon for the determination of sense, but *synthesising consciousness* gathers meaning or

¹⁵ See chapter one, especially p. 35.

¹⁶ Levinas of course emphasises that intentionality is always towards fulfillment, never attained.

sense as univocal according to the living present. Moreover, although Husserl's analyses of passive synthesis recognise a "fundamental stratification" between "passivity and receptivity on the one hand, and that spontaneous activity of the ego typified by judgments, on the other" (OM 272-3) it nevertheless remains that Husserl's analyses do not take the real consequence of this as this calls for a reconception of the transcendental. Derrida does. The life of the subjective body, its affections – or 'original transcendental content' (PPB 187) – and the manner in which it effects the ego-subject that makes judgments is never broached in the Husserlian analyses. Henry's analyses negotiate this impasse, which marks classical phenomenology, through his specific conception of the forgetfulness of immanence.

If Husserl sees, as Welton points out, that there must be a distinction between language and thought as active intention, the consideration remains misplaced with regard to the account of the living body. The insufficient account of the affection and effects of the living body with regard to sense-formation is the reason why "thinking" is reduced to its active intention. Welton's criticism of Husserl is misplaced to the extent that the question that must be posed in face of the Husserlian analyses is not whether passivity, receptivity and notions of the linguistic origins of thought are broached in his analyses, but of the possibility within classical phenomenology of a real consequence or elaboration of the insights provided. The answer to that question is that Husserl's insufficient account of language in a broad sense leaves out the import of signification as it is born out of affectivity and a real sense of embodiment. Husserl cannot account for what has been described above as the 'otherness of self-awareness': the separation or difference that is the origin of Self, and that is inseparable from the alterity experienced by the living body. "Thinking" cannot be separated from its origins in the body, and so the distinction between language and thought as active intention is misplaced and insufficient. It misses a crucial dimension of both thought and language. Taking seriously the notion of the subjective body and what it can do, we must conclude that the signification of language in a broad sense – with Derrida and Henry – is not separable from thinking. This inseparability is differently conceived than what Husserl seems to have in mind in the early works, in which language clearly coincides with thought.

Welton's argument regarding the re-orientation in Husserl's notions of sense and language is supported by his reading of Husserl's 1920-21 lectures on "Transcendental Logic", in which the ideality of language is not referable to an ideal intuition of consciousness. The fact remains that the consequences of this are not explored as a problematic in Husserl's published works, and that fact must be considered in terms of his neglect of the real implications of embodiment. Husserl remains engrossed with the ideal of a 'scientific' language. The idea of correlation, the ideal of the mathematical object guiding the question of sense formation, remains an abstraction and 'forgetfulness' of what the body can and does do as transcendental content. Ultimately, the sense of language and 'linguistic' in Husserl – even in the lectures on "Transcendental Logic" – is reduced to word-formation(s). Thus there cannot be a real account of the relation between embodiment and language, and language and thought. In a passage from the lectures on "Transcendental logic" quoted by Welton, it is clear that Husserl's statements amount to a recognition that "thinking", even solitary thinking, is linguistic (OM 376). Husserl's statements are, firstly with regard to "thinking expressing itself in solitude", that it is "certainly not" a matter of first having a conceptual formation and then seeking "the appropriate words". Husserl's states: "Thinking is performed at the very outset as linguistic. What lies in our practical horizon as that which is to take on structure is the still indeterminate presentation of a formation that is already a linguistic formation". However, 'linguistic' is here understood according to a notion of language in the narrow sense. This performance by consciousness remains dependent on a capacity of cognition to perform a synthesising operation. The passage continues to claim that "[t]he thought that *floats before us* and that we inwardly bring to expression is already double-sided but yet completely indeterminate" (my emphasis). Then 'concludes' that "[a]ll sense-fulfilled assertions as concrete unities of linguistic body and linguistic sense are 'spiritual formations'"¹⁷. Welton suggests that the vagueness of the concluding paragraphs here opens up implications that Husserl at this point does not wish to consider. He proceeds to

¹⁷ All the above Husserlian statements are from his 1920-21 lectures on "Transcendental Logic" as cited in Donn Welton, *The Origin of Meaning*, p. 276.

quote a passage from Husserl's *Formal and Transcendental Logic* that demonstrates the extent to which Husserl engages with the sense of "thinking" as "linguistic at the outset":

Human thinking is usually accomplished linguistically, and all confirmations of *reason* are as good as entirely bound up with *speech*. Furthermore, so far as it is intersubjective, all critique from which the rationally true is to emerge *uses* language and its results always leads to propositions¹⁸.

This passage underwrites my argument that Husserl restricts himself to the sense of language according to speech-acts. Thought is determined by the act of speech, as it produces the correlation in which the rationally true emerges. The specific sense of intentionality, which informs Husserl's notion of speech *act* as every act of meaning, is based in a forgetfulness of the body-subject regarding the formation of meaning.

Welton points out that the genetic analysis of passive synthesis in Husserl (in the second part of F I 37 and published as *Analyses zur Passiven Synthesis*) is reduced to "sense genesis of judgments": that is, the analysis of the "intentional implications", as a "sense-history" of the judgment which is as Welton points out only "incidentally temporal" (OM 278). The real implication of temporality, the absence of an alterity that always already disrupts the unity of the conscious self-aware subject, Husserl does not elaborate. Temporality's originary role with respect to the sense-formations that prompt the emergence of subjectivity is reduced to something "incidental" in Husserl. Husserl's priority lies with the constitutive function of subjectivity with respect to meaning formation. Husserlian 'genetic' analysis is bound to, and reduced by, the priority of the methodology as it is presumed to exhaust meaning formation. Although perceptual meaning in Husserl differs from the logistic determinations of meaning in the earlier works, he cannot free perception from cognition; perceptual meaning is identified with language, as something more than a projection by consciousness. However, this language, in so far as it is restricted to its function within (originary) speech-acts, ignores

¹⁸ The passage corresponds to the lectures on "Transcendental Logic", catalogued as F I 37 (1920-26), and Edmund Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 357. My emphases.

an irreducible factor in meaning formation, and so this liberation of meaning from its early logistical characterisation does not go far enough¹⁹. It restricts the notion of language and thus delimits any 'genetic' sense of the approach to meaning formation. The beginnings of transcendental phenomenology, even the later beginnings, presuppose a delay that necessarily passes unrecognised.

Husserl's attempt at a differentiation of thought and language in terms of 'stratification' remains a negative abstraction. The analyses of passive as well as active syntheses are conducted according to this stratification. In F I 37, Husserl speaks of introducing a broader analysis of sense bestowal beyond the function of propositions, words and the medium of expression (OM 279). However, any attempt at accounting for pre-predicative experience is referred to its complex relation to the judging activity of ego-consciousness in a manner that excludes the real implication of language as something that precedes me as my-self. Any reciprocity between experience and predication is limited to what is present to consciousness in the narrow sense of the Husserlian living present. The recognition in Husserl's later works that language and signification are informed by sedimentations of culture, that there is thus meaning formation in excess of the acts of consciousness, are not taken up with respect to the body or an originary temporality. Beyond Husserl, language must be conceived in broader terms than the life world of man in face of the cultural community. Meaning formation is in excess of "man's" perspectives afforded by man's vision of cultural inter-subjectivity. That these perspectives are considered linguistic, informed by 'sedimentation', does not complete a genetic account of meaning-formation. The *presence* of the life-world is presence to the Husserlian ego-consciousness, language is a function of the horizons *present* to this ego-consciousness, and is thus forgetful of the immanence of the body with respect to transcendental subjectivity and transcendental phenomenology, and the alterity that informs any presence to self. Beyond Husserl, alterity should not just be defined negatively. Alterity conceived in terms of corporeality and a corpo-real is not just a

¹⁹ Welton suggests that Husserl's later and "proper description of the structure of perceptual acts" has repercussions with regard to his theory of language which liberates meaning from the early logistical characterisations, but sees this liberation in the identification of language and meaning "in the case of originary speech acts" (OM 283).

foreign instance that distorts cognitive intentional acts of recognition. Alterity so conceived is a non-representable which informs the mind in a form of recognition that is not representational, and that is not presentable according to a pure consciousness. Alterity leaves traces²⁰ – inseparable from the being of the subjective body – and is what passes through subjectivity without becoming present or re-presentable. It is this aspect of corporeality that should be accounted for in a genetic account of language and meaning formation. Husserl's analyses fall short of a sufficient account of genesis and language on these grounds.

My argument with respect to this forgetfulness of classical phenomenology, which in *fact* is presupposed by its analyses, points to immanent genesis as the very potential for meaning formation. I will address the analyses of Gilles Deleuze in the next section. My reason for taking up Deleuze on this point is that he provides a notion of immanence that clarifies the idea of a missed potential of this tradition of thought in terms of immanent genesis.

III. 'Sensibility' and Immanence: Deleuze

Gilles Deleuze's thought poses the question of immanence in similar terms to Henry; his notion of immanence is developed in response to what he considers to be the illusion of transcendence in thought. Deleuze's thought, like Henry's, departs from traditional phenomenological tenets. His notion of immanence provides challenges to classical phenomenology as well as to strands of post-structuralist thought with which he is often too easily aligned. Like Henry, Derrida and Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze's thought departs from classical phenomenology in his questioning of the referral of phenomena to the

²⁰ "Trace" is here understood in Levinas's and Derrida's sense of the term.

interiority of consciousness or the thinking subject who constitutes them²¹. Like Merleau-Ponty and Derrida he also engages with phenomenology and Husserl. Post-structuralist thought in general shares the critique of the subject considered as methodological point of certainty, as the essence that *constitutes* the world. For Deleuze, as for most post-structuralist thought, the question is how the subject is constituted in the given. Deleuze's philosophy operates with a notion of dynamic materiality that speaks for genesis outside eidetically determined structures, or constitution of objects in consciousness. Deleuze speaks of a physics of bodily life, which underwrites the notion of immanent genesis as bound up with *sensibility*.

Classical phenomenology's recognition of a moment of passivity with regard to subjectivity would on Deleuze's account fall short of an adequate recognition of immanence with respect to transcendence. Deleuze, with Guattari, points out that it is a feature of the "modern moment" to think transcendence from immanence:

[W]e are no longer satisfied with thinking immanence as immanent to a transcendent; we want to think transcendence within the immanent, and it is from transcendence that a breach is expected (WP 47).

When phenomenology discusses immanence as immanent to transcendental subjectivity, "as in Husserl and many of his successors who discover in the Other or in the Flesh, the mole of the transcendent within immanence itself" (WP 53), the problem lies with the notion of constitution, and the *abstract schematism* of the operation of intentionality. Deleuze does not, with regard to the priority of transcendental subjectivity in classical phenomenology, deny transcendental acts. What he questions is the presumption of a prior and originary transcendental instance in consciousness and its constitutive capacity; the problem with this presumption in classical phenomenology is the positing of the subject in transcendence from its material.

²¹ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994). Deleuze says, "... with Descartes, then Kant and Husserl, the cogito makes it possible to treat the plane of immanence as a field of consciousness. Immanence is supposed to be immanent to a pure consciousness..." (46). Hereafter WP.

Deleuze's problematisation of the phenomenological 'exit from matter' reorients the notion of subjectivity in terms of an essential openness pertaining to the materiality of being. This openness is to an excess characteristic of material being that exceeds and is productive of the life of subjectivities. I want to introduce this point as taken up in Deleuze by a comment on Merleau-Ponty, who conceives of the openness in terms of his notion of *Flesh*. Unlike Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty conceives openness to the materiality of being in a manner that blurs the relation between the material and immaterial. In Deleuze, the material and immaterial are co-extensive but not in a figural sense, and so differently conceived than in Merleau-Ponty.

In the *Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty regards being as infinity rather than subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty recognises here a notion of infinity which, as in Spinoza as well as Leibniz, is positive: "a depth of being which is recognised only with the notion of infinity [as] an inexhaustible reserve of being which is not only this but could have been other (Leibniz) or is effectively more than we know (Spinoza, the unknown attributes)... They have devalued the closed world for the benefit of a positive infinity" (WN 169)

The veritable infinity... must be what exceeds us: the infinity of *Offenheit* and not of *Unendlichkeit*—Infinity of the *Lebenswelt* and not infinity of idealization—Negative infinity therefore—Meaning or reason which are contingency (169).

The notion of being as infinity is understood here not in terms of the idealisation of a teleology of reason, but in terms of an openness (*Offenheit*) to the materiality of being²². However, this openness with regard to the materiality of being is understood in Deleuze, as in Henry, in terms of the divergence of affectivity and not in terms of the continuity implied in Merleau-Ponty's notion of *Flesh*. According to the relation of otherness and self-awareness implied by Henry's temporality in terms of 'antecedence' or anteriority,

²²Deleuze says about (Spinozist) attributes that "they are indeed substances in a purely qualitative sense" and expresses with this his reading of Spinoza according to a specific notion of infinity in relation to 'immanence', our involvement with the dynamic materiality of existence. See *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. M. Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992) p. 65. Hereafter EP.

the divergence in affectivity must be understood in a non-figural sense. Revelation, as a movement of immanence – infinity – is according to Henry's descriptions of the excess of affective *Life* irreducible to Being as ontological difference.

Deleuze's notion of immanence as absolute processuality and emergence questions the regime of Being according to ontological difference in terms of the notion of our involvement with a dynamic materiality and *becoming*. His notion of becoming displaces the idea of ontological difference to the extent that it is based in a notion of ground or origin conceived according to a homogeneous relation to what is grounded (LS 96): *Becoming* implies a genesis that does not concern origin or end, and a certain forgetfulness of egoic subjectivity. The notion reflects Deleuze's concern with a *thought involved in the body*, but not as in Merleau-Ponty reducible to it. In *Difference and Repetition* he argues: "in the path which leads to that which is to be thought, everything begins with sensibility" (DR 144).

Deleuze's "transcendental empiricism" puts out the idea of a sensibility in face of thought. This 'sensibility' is different from sensation as directive of empiricism proper; it diverges from transcendental determination regarding the constitution of the world of subjects and objects. The sensibility in question here is affectivity or the 'passage' between sensations, the designation of a power or potential of non-dialectical *becoming*. Deleuze describes this sensibility according to the notion of a 'transcendental field'. Different from empirical representation according to a subject or sensation, it refers to a 'duration' of impersonal pre-reflexive consciousness – the immanence of a movement without beginning or end, irreducible to the positing of a Self or an object. The transcendental field must be conceived as anterior to the classical delimitations of the 'field' of consciousness, which determined subject and object in the rigidity of their phenomenological constellation. Deleuze conceives of the 'transcendental field' as a virtual power – the capacity to be affected – that actualizes itself as factual consciousness through the simultaneous production of subject and object when the subject 'refers' consciousness to objects. This conception of the production of subjectivities is different from the phenomenal positing of a self in transcendence from its material. Deleuze

articulates the notion of an absolute immanence, immanence that is not *in* or *to* an already posited transcendent instance. The problem with such positing, performed by classical phenomenology, is that the subject posited according to such transcendence remains a generality of being in which immanence is contained and thus 'deformed', that is, stripped of material content. The latter conception of subjectivity as a synthesising unity closes off the materiality of being, reduces it to the objectivity of the world. Nothing is in excess of this transcendent instance, and being cannot be thought as anything but being-object. The notion of absolute immanence, what Deleuze calls a 'plane of' immanence, refers to an anteriority with regard to transcendent effort, defined by the transcendental field, the pre-personal – 'consciousness' or 'awareness' without self.

Deleuze's Spinozism²³ reorients the relation of mind and matter, in so far as the materiality of being is conceived differently than the figuration by classical phenomenology in which materiality is the inert hyle awaiting its formation into sense by a synthesis on the part of transcendent consciousness. Deleuze's philosophy of immanence makes an important distinction with his notion of the plane of immanence. According to Deleuze,

Any organization that comes from above and refers to transcendence [...] can be called a theological plan: [...] it will always be a plan of transcendence that directs forms as well as subjects [...]. [It] always has an additional dimension; it always implies a dimension supplementary to the dimensions of the given²⁴.

²³ Deleuze's notions of immanence, univocity and expressionism in philosophy, as I treat these in the next sections, refer to his reading of Spinoza. I engage with these notions to the extent that they cast light on the question of immanent genesis. My argument is that these notions enable an understanding of immanent genesis in line with the analyses of Henry and Derrida as they point out the limitations of the phenomenological and certain classical analyses of meaning formation.

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Richard Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988) p. 128. Hereafter PP.

Conversely, a plane of immanence “has no supplementary dimension; the process of composition must be apprehended for itself, through that which it gives. It is a plan of *composition*, not a plan of organization or development”, that is, production of ‘the new’ rather than a modification of the contents already belonging to a consciousness (PP 128, my emphasis). Deleuze’s philosophy is a valuable contribution with respect to the question of immanent genesis; it redefines materiality in terms of his notion of immanence. Genesis is understood in terms of the virtual potential of a plane of composition, across which a materiality of being – in its excess from consciousness – creates according to impersonal or pre-personal becomings²⁵. Life is understood according to a notion of dynamic materiality: it is a ‘virtual multiplicity of events and responses’. I quoted Deleuze from *Negotiations 1972-1990* in chapter one, arguing for the indistinction of images and things: “There’s no difference at all between *images*, *things* and *motion*”²⁶. The idea of production conceived according to an impersonal process – becoming – questions even the nature/artifice distinction. The Deleuzian plane of immanence does not make this distinction, “artifice is fully a part of nature” (PP 124). This is a not unimportant point. The effort to make a distinction between nature and artifice, which marks much of the tradition of thought, is less pertinent here than the effort to account for the extent to which a materiality of being marks both. A certain Life marks nature and artifice in a non-organic sense. This conception eludes the phenomenological analyses. Deleuze thinks the in-distinction in terms of a production or process, which displaces idealistic categories to the extent that its relationship to desire is thought as an immanent principle outside the transcendence of consciousness. When desire as such is thought as a logic of immanence, what this does is question the power of conceptualisation as an intentional activity of ‘pure’ consciousness, according to which the abstraction and generality of a universalisable notion are presumed in transcendence of its material or content. Desire, as the logic of immanence, puts the notion back in its context or concrete situation, restores it to the materiality of its emergence. The point

²⁵ See Gilles Deleuze, “First Series of Paradoxes of Pure Becoming”, pp. 1-3, in *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (London: Athlone, 1990, [1969]). Hereafter referred to as LS.

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, quoted in Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze*, (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 88. My emphasis added.

emphasised is that matter is more than what is taken up by consciousness, mastered by perception. I shall return to this point regarding matter and perception.

The specific nature of Deleuze's thinking of immanence must be understood according to his development of the notion of univocity in his reading of Spinoza. His thinking of an 'infinite infinite'²⁷, or absolute processuality, reflect his univocal ontology²⁸. The notion holds Deleuze's response to the Heideggerian opening of the question of Being in terms of 'ontological difference'²⁹. In what way is Being said of beings? Deleuze's argument in *Difference and Repetition* is that Heidegger's treatment of the question never probed sufficiently the consequence of ontological difference; he did not adequately think difference in itself. For Deleuze, only a univocal ontology can provide a necessary concept of difference in itself, and "conceive of *being* in such a manner that it will be truly disengaged from any subordination in relation to the identity of representation" (DR 66). Deleuze's claim is a seeming paradox: "univocal Being belongs only to *difference*" (66). What exactly is the relation then, for Deleuze, between a univocal ontology and a thought of difference in itself?

Deleuze's system of univocal ontology moves beyond both Spinoza and Heidegger in that it removes the classical references of God, self and world. In Spinoza, Deleuze finds an ontology of univocity in which Being is 'said in one sense'. However, the project of *Difference and Repetition*, to think difference outside the concept of identity moves beyond Spinoza in its attempt to articulate univocity according to pure differentiation or modality, movement³⁰. In an affirmation of Heidegger's 'ontological intuition', Deleuze

²⁷ See WP Deleuze describes this duration or 'event' as "there where nothing takes place, an infinite awaiting that is already infinitely past, awaiting and reserve" (158). The virtuality of the pure plane of immanence – the Deleuzian event - means that nothing *takes place*, but "everything becomes" as "variations, modulations [...] singularities of a new order" (158). I will elaborate on Deleuze's thinking of the event and 'singularities' in the following sections.

²⁸ Deleuze introduces univocity in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, his main book on Spinoza. The theme of univocity is prominent in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*.

²⁹ Deleuze states: "We regard as fundamental this 'correspondence' between difference and questioning, between ontological difference and the being of the question" (DR 66).

aims to conceive a univocity or immanence according to which “difference [is] articulation and connection in itself” (DR 117). According to Deleuze, an adequate concept of difference in itself “must relate different to different *without any mediation* whatsoever by the identical, the similar, the analogous or the opposed” (117, my emphasis). Deleuze refutes the Aristotelian claim that the Being of beings must be understood according to analogy, that is, according to the categories of possible experience determined by the transcendent instance of T/hought, that is, the categories of a specific concept of representation³¹. The determination of the sense of Being with respect to beings on this model of representation is conceived in terms of a generality that prevents, according to Deleuze, any real concept of the universal as well as the singular. The genesis of the individual – individuation – or the formation of meaning is on this model of representation reduced to a generality according to a reflexive difference only, afforded by identity in the concept³². Paradoxically, an analogical or equivocal distribution of Being can only account for what is on this account general in beings³³. Thinking univocity, on Deleuze’s model, on the other hand, accounts for individuation and difference in itself outside this model of representation. While Being is said in the same sense of all that is, the Being of beings is not attempted grasped in terms of substance or form(ation) according to the categories, but in terms of the divergence of

³⁰ Deleuze moves beyond Spinoza with this point, as in Spinoza modification is *of* substance, or God. Difference is here still regulated according to an ultimate reference point or a principle of ultimate identity. You could say that Deleuze replaces Spinoza’s notion of substance with a ‘sub-instance’. I will explain this in the sections below, in terms of Deleuze’s thought of genesis according to the notions of event and intensity.

³¹ The Aristotelian legacy subordinates difference to ‘identity’ in the structure of representation that Deleuze criticises in DR. This structure conceives difference according to a fourfold subordination: analogy of judgment; identity in the concept and opposition between predicates; and resemblance as the yardstick with respect to perception. This structure is made possible by the abstraction which overcodes the real, as a prior transcendence of consciousness to its material – the main problem from which Deleuze’s thought makes its departure. The critique of this structure is necessarily bound up with the notion of immanent genesis.

³² See Deleuze’s comments on Aristotle in DR pp. 269-70 especially.

³³ According to DR, with an analogical or equivocal concept of Being the relation to beings is determined by the distribution of ‘common sense’ and the hierarchical notion of ‘good sense’. Particularity is subsumed and undermined by a generality afforded by the categories. See especially p. 269. See also Deleuze, LS pp. 75-9.

affectivity or 'modal variation'. What this means is that a real being of the body – what happens to bodies – is taken into account as a crucial determinant of the Being of beings.

Deleuze can present this novel model of univocity in so far as he speaks of real difference in itself, the relation of Being to beings, as a degree of power or *intensity*³⁴. This notion of difference in itself can only be conceived according to univocity. Deleuze's thesis is that univocity understood in this manner gives a collective rather than distributive sense of Being and so can account for real difference in itself. The relevance of this notion of univocity is that it gives a sense of embodiment that accounts for differential relations as they mark the life of the body. Within the univocal sense of Being, difference is effected according to a capacity for affectivity. That is, "intensity is the form of difference in so far as this is the reason of the sensible. Every intensity is differential, by itself a difference" (222). Difference in itself is understood according to a quantitative rather than qualitative measure: Being is 'immediately' in all beings, without mediation of a transcendent. To the extent that a degree of power or intensity accounts for a quantitative difference, or difference in itself, it is the 'element' of immanence that allows us to think immanent genesis. In so far as Deleuzian difference in itself cannot be grasped on the classical model of representation, it is the 'non' Being of the virtual. I put 'non' in inverted commas, as the virtual is not opposed to the real, just to a constitution by a transcendent instance according to the distributive and hierarchical effects of identity, opposition and negation (145). The notion of immanent genesis makes sense if the relation of Being to beings is thought according to affective orientation. Deleuze extends the notion to an orientation in thought which restores it to its concrete situation. Thought cannot be thought in transcendence of its material. This recognition emphasises the necessity of thinking affectivity, body and immanent genesis.

³⁴ Deleuze elaborates what he means by difference in itself in *Difference and Repetition*. Difference is "not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given... as diverse. Difference is not phenomenon, but the noumenon closest to the phenomenon... [an] inequality by which it is conditioned" (222). Every event and appearance is referred, according to this notion of difference, to a correlation with "orders of differences: differences of ... tension, potential, difference of intensity" (222).

Deleuze's concepts of univocity and 'difference in itself' are important in their capacity to take up the real being of the body. The concept of univocity marks an advance on the traditional or classical model, from Aristotle, through Kant to phenomenology, in that its account of non-categorical difference allows him to formulate a difference of Being from itself, not just external difference between beings. I mean by this that a life of the body *is* always as its difference from itself, in so far as it is always 'itself' according to a transcendental perspective or an 'original transcendental content'. The Deleuzian account of univocity grasps the perspective of the body, its effects and in-formation with respect to consciousness. The body and the mind are on this account 'externally related'.

One consequence of the notion of a difference of Being from itself is that subjectivity is reconfigured as 'multiplicitous'. This means that subjectivity emerges through the difference of its body – affectivity – and according to the events that mark a passage between bodies. Genesis is understood according to differentiation by degrees of power or 'intensities' – the capacity to be affected. As multiplicitous, subjectivity emerges through its difference from itself, that is, from a pre-verbal, pre-personal state, anterior with regard to the personal psychic self of structural linguistics or classical phenomenology. As multiplicitous, subjectivity is thought according to the being – the event – of the subjective body³⁵. Accordingly, this account changes the concept of 'possible experience'. *Multiplicity* is conceived according to two different aspects, both emphasising embodiment. Firstly, it refers to the fact that there are events of different strata or levels of experience. Experience is produced according to affectivity, feeling and the pathic, not just through schemas of rational and logical thought. According to Deleuze's concept of becoming, the becoming of bodies and language are co-extensive. Secondly, multiplicity is conceived in terms of movement and process, or the emergence of immanent being. Subjectivity is traced back to the concrete situation of its material or embodied being, to its singularisation by what Deleuze describes as 'the plane of

³⁵ In WP Deleuze states "The event does not relate the lived to a transcendent subject = Self but, on the contrary, is related to the immanent survey of a field without subject" (WP). Whereas Deleuze speaks of a "non-psychological life of spirit", a certain non-organic *life*, I will use the term 'subjective body' as this term captures well the emphasis on embodiment that is required to think, with Deleuze – and Henry – an immanent genesis.

immanence'. Deleuze describes the plane of immanence as a dimensionality that "knows only relations of movement and rest, of speed and slowness, between unformed or relatively unformed, elements, molecules and particles borne away by fluxes" (DR 92). In other words, this concept of subjectivity, a consequence of the model of univocity, diverges markedly from the phenomenological emphasis on integrated subjectivity, noting a forgetfulness of egoic subjectivity. The Being of beings becomes on this model inseparable from the anterior sensibility pertaining to the body's affections. Embodiment is thought according to non-linear processes that elude reflective consciousness. Subjectivity emerges in a process inseparable from differentiation according to a capacity for affectivity, the material being which Deleuze terms 'intensive'. This is what I mean by Deleuze's displacement of 'substance' as well as the organising principle of the individual or self in supposed transcendence of its material, for the sub-instance or the event of being inseparable from embodiment.

Deleuze's philosophy theorises the virtual dimension of intensity or affect as immanent to body and mind, and thus to experience; it is, however, not directly accessible in terms of the structures of representation. An invisibility or anonymity informs the Being of beings and the formation of subjectivity – the supposed 'transcendent unit' as the ultimate concept of identity is never the purity of its presence to self. The importance of this reconceptualisation of subjectivity as multiplicitous lies in the incorporation of an affective dimension constitutive of, but not reducible to, the individual constituted. Singularisation or individuation refers to the reality of 'sub-instances' that cannot be reduced to qualities added to an already formed transcendent instance. This materiality of being, or 'affect', as the point of engagement by which the mind-body dualism is suspended, questions by extension the subject-object distinction. Deleuze's 'differentiation of difference' involves a specific temporality which marks an indistinction between subject and object, even between the human and the natural/artificial object. Deleuze presents his thought as a challenge to the tradition of thought which refers the Being of being to transcendent substance and the absolute interiority of subjectivity; the challenge comes in the form of a 'physics' or physicality according to intensive quantities, and so a destabilization of the 'pure' phenomenological

present. His theory of intensive multiplicities or the anteriority of multiplicity effects a 'disintegration' or de-personalisation of subjectivity on the phenomenological model.

Deleuze's notion of absolute immanence is very close to Henry's notion of *Life* as that which refers Being to an excess of being necessarily irreducible to the acts of transcendental consciousness. The point Deleuze makes is that subjectivity must be conceived according to its 'incarnation', its emergence in the midst of the materiality of being. Deleuze's conception of an openness to the materiality of being is thought in terms of a notion of 'virtuality', a potential for singularisation, or an event realised by the plane of immanence as the latter corresponds to 'lived states' inseparable from the materiality of being. Deleuze describes 'event' in terms of the indefinite article – it refers to *a life*, an anteriority of being, which in-forms me as my self. In so far as virtuals define immanence, the actual is the process that takes up the event according to its 'plane' of reality, that is, an attribution or 'incarnation' of substance into subject and object³⁶. The plane of immanence is not contained by subject (or object), but designates a *life* constituted by events – irreducible to subjective or objective determination – and by singularities/processes of singularisation, or pre-subjective, pre-reflexive acts of the body. Transcendental acts are thus not reducible to transcendent determination. The transcendental field is not something contained by the ego-consciousness, but the event across which the formation of consciousness happens, that is, the indefinite life according to which consciousness actualises itself. The notion of absolute immanence may be defined according to a 'temporality of antecedence', that is, according to the passage of *a life* across which subjectivity emerges among states of things and according to a lived state inseparable from the subjective body. The 'essence of' subjectivity *becomes* in this manner inseparably from an openness to the materiality of being. This Spinozist conception of immanence, which is not immanence *to* something, allows Deleuze to articulate transcendence as always already a product of immanence. Such an articulation of immanence allows the question of genesis to be posed outside the determinations of

³⁶ Recall that Deleuze leaves the Spinozist vocabulary of substance and attributes in DR. The Spinozist vocabulary demonstrates adherence to a concept of difference according to identity, which Deleuze precisely attempts to move beyond in this work.

ego-consciousness and reformulates the relation of subjectivity to the materiality of its being. The question of genesis becomes inseparable from a specific understanding of embodied being.

(a) The Body-Conscious and the Question of Immanent Genesis

In the compendium to his *Expressionism, Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988), Deleuze emphasises an insight of Spinoza's parallelism of mind and body: rather than thinking a body determined by the workings of the mind, Spinoza recognises that there are actions of the mind that are also and already actions of the body (PP 18). Deleuze reintroduces into the midst of T/hought – the notion of what thought is as well as the philosophical operation – what I will call the 'body-conscious'. 'The body-conscious' recognises the role played by the body and its affections in the formation of consciousness. For Deleuze this means re-thinking what thought can do. If thought begins, so to speak, with the body, with the materially affected being of subjectivity, thought in terms of the life that produces subjectivities, then this means a re-thinking of the notions of representation and reflection.

That there are actions of the body that are not taken up in the mind according to reason and representation does not mean that these – as supposed 'disembodied' categories of thought – are not affected by that which eludes them. Deleuze refers the impossibility of disembodied thought to an unconscious of thought (PP 19). Deleuze attributes to Spinoza the recognition that, in the context of ethics, a 'just view' must take account of the body. There is no disembodied view or perspective from which to make judgments. The perspective of the body is an immanent perspective, immanence within thought, which is also the source of the incompleteness or impossibility of its transcendence. This means that the ideas of T/thought are necessarily 'inadequate'. Deleuze's 'ethics', as he takes up Spinoza's thought on this point, concerns itself with an unconscious or unthought of

T/thought³⁷. This means that he adopts an ethos of thinking – the thought of immanence – that is involved with the body and takes seriously the Spinozist departure from the idea of the ‘disembodied’ rational consciousness for a focus on how thought is correlated with the affections and effects of the body-conscious. There are unknown aspects of the living body as there is an unknown of thought, and this further complicates the notion of a beginning of thought. The resource of the non-conscious of the body is what Deleuze refers to when he states: “we do not know what a body can do” (PP19). The real significance of the body must be sourced in terms of the *situation* of thought – the emergence of the being-subject of thought according to a so-called plane of immanence, according to which everything that is expressed is already inscribed within materiality. Deleuze’s notion of the unconscious of thought questions the abstractions of representation as ‘inadequate’. Representation misses the emphatic dimension of real activities; it loses the body-conscious to the illusion of the adequacy of a ‘pure’ consciousness. When Deleuze says that “immanence is the unconscious itself and the conquest of the unconscious” (29), he means to take matter into account over meaning insofar as representation must be understood to be informed by the life of the subjective body and affected by the forces of its ‘inscribed’ meanings. Immanent thought considers the manner in which it is affected, the manner in which it is inseparable from the materiality of the culturally and ‘linguistically’ inscribed body. The temporality of this body eludes the self-presence of consciousness. The point for Deleuze is not to undertake a reversal of a traditional schema so to privilege body over mind, but to assert the constitutive effects of the former on the latter. The Deleuzian plane of immanence is determined by the notion of transcendental field as a ‘third term’ that represents an outside of thought. According to the dichotomous subject-object and mind-materiality relations of the tradition of Platonic schematism, immanence is only thought within these pairs of oppositions. Deleuze’s thought recognises the subjectivity of thought as already marked in its emergence from fields of organisation and signification³⁸. Immanent

³⁷ In WP Deleuze describes the plane of immanence as the “nonthought within thought” (59), but the plane of immanence is more than a presupposition about the state or nature of T/thought, it is a matter of being also, a presupposition regarding the unconditioned.

³⁸ Refer to Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) for the elaboration of this point.

genesis refers to the subjective and variously subjected body as always already part of a cultural-material matrix of discourses and meanings. Not that the discourse of classical phenomenology does not, but it does not to any real extent think the body as the body of thought. To do so demands asking the question of immanent genesis.

Immanent genesis acknowledges that being exceeds being-object and that subjectivity cannot be posited in transcendence from its material/ity. Phenomenology's veritable exit from matter is for Deleuze an abstraction, according to the concomitant notions of representation and reflection, which ultimately spells an impotence of thought. A body, for Deleuze, is a site according to which physiological and socio-cultural forces engage. Subjectivity is thought according to the subjective body and its determinations of thought. Subjectivity is not an encounter of a thought with another without being scripted, signified according to the perspective of the subjective body. This perspective is its openness to the materiality of being in so far as this body is not enclosed 'by its skin', but enfolds the physiological and socio-cultural according to its own perspective or specific temporality³⁹.

The temporality of the body, according to Deleuze's account, must be understood in terms of antecedence with respect to consciousness, as the difference between a lived state and a preceding state. According to Deleuze, the power of a body must be felt relative to the anteriority and implied affects of the preceding state (PP 39). The outside of T/hought refers in Deleuze not just to an external context of inscriptions but to what co-exists with, but is not reducible to, the present now or presence to consciousness as the emergence and duration of emotions, for example. The body is, according to an expression of emotions, a capacity for evaluation irreducible to acts of consciousness⁴⁰. Such evaluation eludes representation and reflection on the classical model. A *corpo-*

³⁹ See Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: The Athlone Press, 1993) p. 85, especially. Hereafter this work is referred to as LB.

⁴⁰ Deleuze interprets Spinoza's system as a logic of expression. Deleuze's 'expressionism' amounts to the view that expression – such as that of the subjective body – is a power of existence, which exceeds the limitations of 'possible experience' as determined by the tradition of philosophy traceable from Aristotle and Kant to phenomenological analyses. See EP, pp. 155-67.

real, referring to the body in terms of its temporality and affections, is not encountered in representation, but resists the closed present or 'the world' according to consciousness. Deleuze says regarding 'the new' that it is relevant in so far as it affects, that is, in so far as a difference is introduced into the present or what we are, in terms of which we become (WP 112). In *Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze regards time in terms of an asymmetry, a differentiation of the past retained in itself from a spontaneity which creates the new/future (107). In *Difference and Repetition* (1994) this spontaneity becomes the mark of a becoming, a temporality of the body which, if taken seriously, means the affirmation of all chance (198). Temporality is thus inseparable from a difference that eludes the self-presence of ego-consciousness. This difference constitutes temporality; the temporality of the body is conditioned by external inscription, encounters with other 'bodies' that elude representation in reflection.

The body, on Deleuze's account, defines a mode of existence different from the determinations and relations that make up the present according to consciousness in its presence to Self. Thought can – and should according to the Deleuzian ethos of immanence – be understood according to the body as an intense capacity that affects the formation of thought. Deleuzian 'ethics' suggests that acts of the mind must be thought according to acts of the body. The latter defines a *mode* of existence according to a virtual capacity that does not reside in the world as determined by the subject-object dichotomies of transcendental consciousness. The subjective body must be thought in terms of a specific sensibility, the reciprocal implications of an intense capacity – affectivity. Affectivity can be grasped in terms of 'the virtual'. The virtual refers to a *life*, rather than the world of our representation, what exists only in terms of its expressions. Such 'expression' is best described as a *revelation* of the body in terms of affectivity. Deleuze says:

The paradox is that at once 'the expressed does not exist outside of the expression and yet bears no resemblance to it, but is essentially related to what expresses itself as distinct from the expression itself (EP 333).

In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze takes as a principle the artwork's independence from its conditions of production: "the foundation cannot resemble what it founds"(99). Generation (of sense) eludes resemblance or any relation in which "the condition [is] [T/]thought in the image of the conditioned as the simple form of possibility"(68). Deleuze's notion of expression, as he takes it from Spinoza, is precisely that which cannot be defined in terms of resemblance: "The significance of Spinozism seems to me this: it frees expression from any subordination to emanative and exemplary causality. Expression itself no longer emanates, no longer resembles anything"(EP 180). Expression for Deleuze is the actualisation of the virtual (DR 211), the plane of immanence or consistency, or the 'infinite infinite'. Deleuze quotes Merleau-Ponty: "The extraordinary harmony of external and internal is possible only through the mediation of a positive infinite... If at the kernel of Being, there is an infinite infinite, every partial being directly or indirectly presupposes it, and is in return really or eminently contained in it"⁴¹. The notion of a past that has never been represented, has never been present⁴², refers to that absence which necessarily informs any present and presence. An absence precedes the phenomenological beginnings of transcendental reflection. This past is an originary past, the trace of which is what Deleuze terms the *immemorial* or repetition without original (DR 85). Again, Deleuze's argument is based on the distinction he makes between intensity and quality and intensity and logical intention.

In the terms by which Deleuze develops Spinoza, an "...eternal and singular essence is the intense part of ourselves that expresses itself relationally as an eternal truth; and existence is the set of extensive parts that belong to us under this durative relation" (PP 40). According to this thought, there is a certain auto-positing of being, which Deleuze understands in terms of the notion of 'eternal return'⁴³: the mode of existence in question

⁴¹ Quoted from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 148-9 in Gilles Deleuze, EP p. 28.

⁴² I take this phrase from Levinas. "The infinity of the infinite comes from a past more distant than that which is within the reach of memory, and is lined up with the present. It comes from a past that has never been represented, has never been present, and which consequently has not let a beginning germinate". Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, p. 114.

⁴³ In DR, Deleuze explains the notion of 'eternal return' in relation to simulacra: "When eternal return is the power of (formless) Being, the simulacrum is the true character or form – the 'being' of that which is.

here is “untimely”, but pertains to a material support without which it ceases to exist (WP 166)⁴⁴. The capacity to affect and be affected forges relations based in this affectivity and this is the importance of ‘what a body can do’⁴⁵. This affectivity can only be thought according to immanent genesis, if by that is meant a certain activity of creation outside the parameters and designations of thought traditionally conceived. T/thought comes from its outside; an unthought of thought is always already part of thought. The outside – irreducible to the exterior on this account – refers to forces of material being that elude the representations of the mind, and are irreducible to its material version, the mind-brain. Affectivity must be thought in terms of an auto-positing dynamism not reducible to classical causal relation.

The problematisation of the phenomenological ‘exit from matter’, as the subject is posited in transcendence from its material, conceives of a co-presence of the finite and the infinite, which is irreducible to relations of cause and effect⁴⁶. The ground and the grounded are derived from this co-presence. Deleuze’s thought attempts to think the co-presence of what would on the classical model be thought as ontologically and temporally different. That this would be possible and even necessary is a valid thought in so far as there can be no other manner of grasping the influence and workings of the body and energetic materiality on thought. The Spinozist conception of immanence, as Deleuze develops it, is an attempt to think ‘the unconditioned’ apart from the transcendent

When the identity of things dissolves, being escapes to attain univocity, and begins to revolve around the different. That which is or returns has no prior constituted identity: things are reduced to the... differences which are implicated in [identity] and through which they pass” (67). Deleuze notes, with reference to Pierre Klossowski: “taken in its strict sense, eternal return means that each thing exists only in returning, copy of an infinity of copies, which allows neither origin nor original to subsist” (67). The simulacrum, the ‘presence’ of which attests to “a difference as its immediate element” (68) puts identity and representation in question. “Things are simulacra themselves” – signs – in so far as the sign interiorises the condition of its repetition, the “coherence of eternal return” (68).

⁴⁴ See also LS, which refers the ‘real subject’ of the eternal return as intensity and singularity, and describes the relation between the virtual potential of intensity and actualised intentionality (299-300).

⁴⁵ See LS where Deleuze describes the ‘provocation of the mind by the body’ and the relation between body and language, the ‘integrity of the body’ with reference to Klossowski (291). The body effects thought.

⁴⁶ The specific co-presence of the finite and the infinite as a co-presence of difference is what Deleuze reads in Leibniz’s description of the monads and ‘the fold’. See LB.

instance, in order to avoid the hierarchies of transcendent organisation. Such organisation and hierarchic relation posit from without material becoming a causality and genesis which thus delimit possible experience according to the transcendent determinations of subjectivity. According to Deleuze's immanentism, cause and effect are not easily distinguishable. An immanent cause refers to the reality of an autopoising of being – being thought in relation to the Indeterminate⁴⁷. Transcendent determination according to consciousness explains a transcendence of the world by what is already part of the world so determined, and so is necessarily limited. The argument regarding immanent genesis, is that this positing of transcendence cannot account for the excess of material being which always already informs it. According to this limitation, immanent causality refutes the notion that what moves is moved by another on the Aristotelian model. Deleuze's re-conception of materiality develops on the Spinozist cause, capable of effecting itself. As opposed to the transcendent instance in classical phenomenology, immanent causality is capable of approaching a notion of a corpo-real, and to take the consequence of the meaning of affectivity. This thought of an immanent cause need not be thought in terms of God, but a notion of infinity problematises the limitations of 'possible experience' according to the transcendent instance of ego-consciousness as a delimitation on thought and the generation of meaning.

According to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, being is identified with infinite being; it is identified with pure affirmation, positivity and creation. Being is a being thought in terms of a virtual cause or power of expression, subject to the recurrence characteristic of the materiality of being. The potential of a virtual cause is different from designations of 'possible experience' as the latter is bound up with transcendent consciousness. That which returns in Deleuze's conception of untimely recurrence is the virtual reality or intensive quantity, which is inseparable from his specific conception of materiality. According to Deleuzian immanence, a qualitative identity of the absolute is relative to a quantitative distinction of beings,

⁴⁷ See Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life", trans. Nick Millett, in *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 14, nr.2, 1997, especially pp. 5-6.

And this quantitative distinction is no mere appearance, but an internal difference, a difference in intensity. So that each finite being must be said to express the absolute, according to the intensive quantity that constitutes its essence, according that is, to the degree of its power (EP 197).

Repetition is of the different in itself, its self-differentiation as the unconditioned being of its immanent cause. Becoming is the mode of being of such immanent causality, a physics or physicality of being (DR 41).

The notion and relevance of a 'power to be differentiated' must be understood in terms of Deleuze's notion of repetition. Deleuze explains the necessity of breaking down the notion of causality in order to arrive at an adequate understanding of repetition. Again, this must be thought in terms of Deleuze's specific reconception of materiality and its critique of the traditional conception of generic subjectivity. According to Deleuze, there are two types of repetition: static repetition, which refers to the "overall, abstract effect [and] results from the work", (that is, 'transcendent' effort), and a dynamic repetition, which "concerns the acting cause... [and] is like the 'evolution' of a bodily movement" (20). Deleuze says of the two types of repetition:

One refers back to a single concept, which leaves only an external difference between the ordinary instances of a figure; the other is the repetition of an internal difference which it incorporates in each of its moments, and carries from one moment to another. One could try to assimilate these two repetitions by saying that the difference between the first and the second is only a matter of change in the content of the concept, or of the figure being articulated differently, but this would be to fail to recognize the respective order of each repetition. *For in the dynamic order there is no representative concept, not any figure represented in a pre-existing space. There is an Idea, and a pure dynamism which creates a corresponding space* (20).

Both Deleuze's concept of repetition and that of difference and intensity are thought according to a notion of 'energetic' materiality. The question of whether there can be

immanent genesis and whether this genesis can be thought depend, with regard to Deleuze's thought, upon his notion of singularities. Deleuze develops the notion of the transcendental field according to its constitution by "impersonal and preindividual nomadic singularities" (109). The conceptual triad consisting of singularity, immanence and intensity is the foundation of Deleuze's conception of materiality. The disruption of the hylomorphic schema of classical phenomenology refutes the judging transcendent instance, as a view from nowhere, a form-ation without content. The notion of singularity opposes the generalities of classical thought, as the latter are incapable of thinking materiality outside a certain imposition of form (the subject as transcendent instance of being, Platonic form, Kantian categories etc.) in its account of genesis. In so far as classical transcendental phenomenology takes up what to Deleuze is an Aristotelian-Kantian impasse, there is an incoherence or incompleteness in the account of genesis. According to *The Logic of Sense*, the critical problem lies with the account being limited by a choice between "either an undifferentiated ground, a groundlessness, formless nonbeing, or a supremely individuated Being and an intensely impersonal Form" (LS 106). Deleuze's re-conception of materiality negotiates this impasse. His conception of materiality is capable of accounting for the excess in material being with regard to the forms of judgment and transcendence. That is, Deleuze theorises energetic materiality outside the image of matter imposed by transcendence. Deleuze's thought of immanence is one that makes the potential of (energetic) materiality constitutive, by recognising the dynamic rather than static nature of bodies as a site of affectivity. Immanent genesis opens thought and entities to an outside. This outside, different from exteriority, refers to a non-organic *life*, according to a "profound link between signs, events, life and vitalism"⁴⁸. This *life* is defined by 'energetic' materiality. Deleuze describes a vital component in the understanding of this life as the being of 'the multiple'. Deleuze differentiates between two alternative accounts of genesis. The first refers to the incomplete notion of meaning formation in the Kantian tradition:

That of an Idea that acts, but is not – that acts therefore only from the point of

⁴⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. M. Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p. 143.

view of an external cerebral knowledge [...]; or that of a force that is but does not act – that is therefore an internal Awareness (from Leibniz to Ruyer)(WP 213).

The latter refers to what I have described as the otherness of self-awareness. This otherness is a consequence of the fact that the lived state of a body is understood as the locus of forces, an unthought of thought⁴⁹. The ‘beginnings’ of meaning formation must be understood in terms of an initial ‘complexity’, from which the states of the lived body are inseparable. The unthought of T/thought or ‘initial complexity’ refers to the fact that thought is always already opened to its outside, and undermines thought’s positing of the given in terms of a “supplementary dimension” (PP 128). This notion of an initial complexity explains the plane of immanence as a ‘plane of composition, not of organisation’ (128). Deleuze’s opening of Spinozist questions is, with regard to the tradition of Kantianism and classical phenomenology, crucial to grasp the extent to which Deleuze can provide a corrective on the issue of genesis and T/thought. Deleuze develops Spinoza’s philosophy in terms of the notion of immanence, while working on the assumption that Spinoza’s thought on immanence provides the means to really resist the impositions on genesis by transcendence. *The Logic of Sense* expresses the task of Thought or philosophy as always “a matter of denouncing the illusion, the false infinite, the infinity of religion and of the theologico-erotic-oneiric myths in which it is expressed” (LS 278). Instead, Deleuze thinks immanence according to a positive infinite, an “infinite infinite” as a kind of affirmation of ‘practical philosophy’. In this lies the valuable ethos of Deleuze’s thought. The necessity of thinking immanent genesis is bound up with the recognition of a Life ‘vis-à-vis’ being, neglected by the transcendent analyses of the tradition, and of the need to assess the being of the body with respect to thought and genesis. Immanent genesis, as always already part of the genetic account of transcendent T/thought, is the obscurity at the heart of it, a missed essence of thought.

⁴⁹ In *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. D.W Smith and M.A Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), Deleuze states that a body refusing its determination by a transcendent perspective as organism (whether the perspective is medical or philosophical), must be understood as a ‘powerful non-organic vitality’ in its relations to ‘the imperceptible forces and powers that seize hold of it, or that it seizes hold of’ (131).

Immanent genesis informs T/thought. Moreover, it disputes the notion of matter as 'content' awaiting form-ation according to the transcendence of consciousness. The insight of Deleuze's take on Spinozism is that there is always already a content 'of form'. The consequence of the inadequate account of this state of things in cartesianism, through Kantianism and classical phenomenology is a repression or disqualification of the view of the body and an incomplete notion of the genesis of meaning or sense.

(b) 'Expressionism' and Genesis of the 'Baroque'.

'Expression', or 'expressivity' rather, refers in Deleuze to an event, the actualisation of the virtual. As the event is of a different order of reality, it is not reducible to a description of events of 'the world' or objects of transcendent determination. According to *What is Philosophy?* the event is "immaterial, incorporeal, unlivable, pure reserve" (156). Immanent genesis can be understood according to this reserve of virtuality in so far as this reserve designates its excess to representation. The implication of Deleuze's thinking of the event is an imbrication of manner with matter. The expressed is *sense* (EP 335), an incorporeal event. As indissociable from 'singularities', sense is anti-general, a "non-represented entity... something extra-representative" (LS 146). Noting the same notion of a 'knowledge' that remains indifferent and "external to its object" as Michel Henry, Deleuze states that "[r]epresentation attains this topical ideal only by means of the hidden expression which it encompasses, that is, by means of the event that it envelops" (146). The generation of sense, in Deleuze, is thought in terms of the power of 'singularities' to 'quasi-cause'; they participate in structures as "effects of corporeal causes" (94). A singularity is an incorporeal doubling of the expression/what is perceived; the question of the body, for Deleuze, concerns its depth or envelopment within surfaces, its "power to organize surfaces" (124). This is the meaning of the statement that the body, on Deleuze's account, is one that is 'not enclosed by its skin', but must be understood relationally. *Sense* must be understood in terms of *sensibility*; it

cannot be understood outside embodiment and a specific notion of 'energetic materiality', it is "that which happens to bodies and that which insists in propositions", that is, "the expressed which subsists in propositions and the event which occurs in states of bodies" (125).

The systematic function Deleuze assigns to the concept of expression in his reading of Spinoza allows him to interpret Spinoza's parallelism in terms of problematising the separation of knowledge and world into theory and materiality⁵⁰. The concept of expression according to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza provides basis for an 'integral' knowledge of reality, and an approach to knowledge embedded in a 'dynamic reality' of which it is the expression.

The logic of expression that Deleuze finds in Spinoza is presented in terms of a triadic structure. Deleuze's designation of *expressionism* in philosophy – represented by Spinoza and Leibniz – questions basic or originary opposition, with respect to the notion of philosophical beginnings and to its overall logic. Deleuze's philosophy must be said to approach an idea of *visceral* thought, a concern with viscera or affectivity. The visceral is other but not opposed to representative consciousness, and a potential of thought. Deleuze's thought takes us beyond theories that reduce consciousness to either physiological or disembodied process. While the word 'visceral' translates as 'inward feeling', the notion of a visceral philosophy reflects a specific problematisation of theory and materiality. *Sensibility*, as the expression of affectivity – forces of the body or the intensity inherent in any materiality – is a condition for objectivity, and the manner in which this is conceived here marks an advance on the attempts made by classical phenomenology. An original *revelation* of the body – I believe this term is close to what Deleuze means by expression – is not only separate from consciousness but conditions objectivity. A visceral philosophy refutes the separation of thought and body, or thought and its object, in Cartesianism and classical phenomenology. It deems it an untenable abstraction.

⁵⁰ As in Henry, Deleuze's ontological thought expresses a deeper sense of complicity between thought and life-world. I refer to the previous paragraphs of this chapter as well as chapter two.

In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze expresses this point as follows: "The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the act of thinking in thought itself" (DR 139). Michel Henry criticises this presupposition as reductive when he states that the 'ontological monism is the theory of thought', reduced to the *ideality* of its presuppositions. Deleuze's *What is Philosophy?* determines philosophy as a form of thought rather than knowledge; real knowledge would involve the dimension excluded from representative ideality, and the reductions of classical phenomenology. It would involve an orientation in thought understood as a positioning for, or as, affectivity.

Deleuze says of the 'logic of sense' – or in another word, sensibility – that it is *inspired* by an empiricism as it "knows how to transcend the experiential dimensions of the visible without falling into Ideas and how to track down, invoke and perhaps produce a phantom at the limit of a lengthened or unfolded experience" (LS 20)⁵¹.

Beyond what representation yields to speculative consciousness and reasoning, Deleuze refers T/thought to the movement of matter/energy, or the pathic conceptualised as *le pli* or the fold. Accordingly, he operates with a conception of a *Life* of immanent unfolding; experience and its terms *are immanently*, their actualised expression thought in terms of the *expressivity* of a virtual matrix. Deleuze's reading of Spinoza and Leibniz by development of the notions of immanence and the fold undertakes a move from the life of subjectivity to the *Life* that produces subjectivities. The re-involvement with the materiality of being problematises the binarism of traditional conceptions of identity and representative knowledge and the Cartesian and structuralist conceptions of subject and object. On these points his thought converges with Michel Henry's.

In accordance with Spinoza, Deleuze develops the notion of *affect* according to its autonomic nature, its *expressivity*. According to Spinoza's *Ethics* on Deleuze's reading, affect is an originary receptivity or revelation or a parallel becoming of body and mind, according to which the notion of origin is reduced to an effect of consciousness.

⁵¹ Deleuze's discussion of expression produces a different concept from that of Husserl, whose notion is thought in terms of resemblance between expression and expressed. See LS p. 20, 97 and 122-3.

Immanent genesis operates outside the latter's delimitations. "The entire *Ethics* is a voyage in immanence; but immanence is the unconscious itself, and the conquest of the unconscious" (PP 29).

In comparison, Henry does not conceive of immanence in terms of the 'unconscious'. However, he conceives the anteriority of the obscurity of the 'essence' insofar as it is the condition of objectivity, as non-conscious. The unconscious in Deleuze names a responsiveness to the sensible. 'The given by which the given is given' refers to a specific notion of sensibility: sensation always involves an outside of sensation. Real genesis must be thought according to an initial complication. This initial complication does not conform to the regime of visibility in representation, and on this point affects the concept of 'perception' as well as 'knowledge'. The former must be extricated from its delimitation by resemblance and recognition on the Aristotelian account.

Recall at this point the notion of 'essence' in Henry, and the argument that obscurity belongs to the essence, *is* the essence (EM 391-2). With respect to the notion of a "latent knowledge of the body" in the early Merleau-Ponty, Henry criticises the transference of knowledge as reduced to a "marginal phenomenon of consciousness" and "simple companion of the perceptive act", as this transference mis-represents the manner in which consciousness and the perceptive act relate to "the immanence of the essence which is the foundation of [the] obscurity" (394). According to Deleuze, to perceive and to unfold means the same: the Leibnizian Monad unfolds between two folds – the fold is 'always a fold in two' – and thus between the folds it perceives. Perception must be understood in terms of a parallel unfolding with the energies and movement of the subjective body, always already scripted according to its past states. Deleuze argues in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993) that ideas and knowledge 'are in the fold', already scripted outside the 'purity' of consciousness's determinations. What Deleuze takes from Leibniz and his theory of perception is the argument that a conscious perception must be related, not to the recognisable object of a traditional schematics of space and time, but to the multiple unconscious perceptions which compose it⁵². *Difference and Repetition* states:

Every perception is hallucinatory because perception has no object. Conscious perception has no object and does not even refer to a physical mechanism of excitation that could explain it from without: it refers only to the exclusively psychical mechanism of differential relations among unconscious perceptions that are comprising it within the Monad (DR 17).

Deleuze's reading of Leibniz considers the process of sensation as firstly the unconscious perceptions of particles of matter, secondly the formation of conscious perceptions of objects. The latter perception is conceived as a derivation or extraction from 'differential relations' of unconscious perception: the affectations of the body take the place of priority from representation. "Thus the variable and relative unity of any given phenomenon can be explained, all phenomena are collective" (LB 120). Representation and its categories seem to miss the encounter in which affectivity as a real force informs perception in the movements between perception and thought. Immanent genesis, thought according to the body, accounts for this movement. The body theorised by Deleuze is B/being according to its expression and perception. The Leibnizian monads, unities enveloping multiplicity, are theorised as expression and *realisation* of the world. However, "realize is not to say that they are real: they become real with respect to what is actual in the soul. Something *completes and realizes it[self] in the body*" (LB 120). Conscious perception has its 'foundation' in a virtual multiplicity of genetic elements. That is to say, the body as a location for perception and site of expression is an impetus for thought. Immanent genesis refers to the genetic elements of thought that constitute its outside and the reality of a 'sub-representative domain'.

Accordingly, the notion of the *fold* and baroque sensibility displaces the notion of ground or origin on the classical account. Deleuze says of the specific *Baroque sensibility*; that "the Baroque invents the infinite work or process" (LB 34). The notion of *fold* involves affectivity:

⁵² Refer to Deleuze's interpretation of Leibniz on perception: "Perception in the Folds" in LB pp. 85-99.

[T]he fold affects all material [and] becomes expressive matter, with different scales, speeds and different vectors... it determines and materializes Form. It produces a form of expression, a *Gestaltung*, the genetic element or infinite line of inflection, the curve with a unique variable... [the infinite fold] separates or moves between matter and soul, the façade and the closed room, the outside and the inside. Because it is a *virtuality* that never stops dividing itself, the line of inflection is actualized in the soul, but realized in matter... Such is the baroque trait: an exterior always on the outside, an interior always on the inside. An infinite "receptivity", an infinite "spontaneity"... Up to now Baroque architecture is *forever confronting two principles, a bearing principle and a covering principle*... Conciliation of the two will never be direct, but necessarily harmonic, inspiring a new harmony (35, my emphasis).

The baroque sensibility refers to an ever-unfolding plane of immanence, on which 'an infinite' expresses itself. According to this sensibility is expressed a virtual continuum as a ground for an actualisation of differentials. The 'baroque sensibility' shares affinities with Michel Henry's development of a 'material phenomenology'; both think immanent movement without the dative relation. Immanence or consistency on this conception is thought in terms of affectivity, inseparable from the being of the body. The main idea of Deleuze's thought is the virtual power that is actualised in the sensual, in a sensibility. My argument is that the notion of the body-conscious, as I take it from Deleuze's analyses of univocity and the baroque, amounts to an adequate notion of immanent genesis as a potential for thought to consider. Michel Henry demonstrates the same potential of thought if he is read according to what is implied by the analyses of language and embodiment.

When Deleuze suggests that the conditions of the sensible be understood outside the Aristotelian and Kantian categories taken up by phenomenology, he points instead to a 'reason of the sensible' as the condition of what appears and describes it as "the Unequal in itself, disparateness as it is determined and comprised in difference of intensity, in intensity as difference" (DR 222-3). 'The Baroque' further develops an understanding of

this intensity. The difficulty of grasping the notion is a consequence of the fact that in experience we know 'intensity' only as "already developed within an extensity" (223). Difference in the form of intensity is marked by its tendency to cancel itself out; "the vanishing of difference is precisely inseparable from an 'effect' of which we are victims. [It] remains implicated in itself, while it is being implicated in extensity" (228). The production of difference or intensity is thus "by definition ... 'in-explicable'" (227). Henry expresses this in his description of the 'essence' of T/thought as 'obscure'. *Life coming to itself*, as Henry would express it, concerns the in-visible, the intensities, energies and movements that pass in – between – bodies. This means that difference is "*essentially implicated*, that its being is implication" (228). Accordingly, the concepts of the repetition of difference and of virtuality in Deleuze point to a complex of material relations of lived experience that informs thought. The use of the variations over the latin terms *complicare* and *explicare* in Deleuze reflects a recognition that the beginnings of thought must necessarily be determined by an 'initial complication' and implication in a manner which has not been sufficiently theorised. With this recognition lies the contribution of 'immanent ontology' and the analyses of both Henry and Deleuze. Their reorientation of thought is an attempt to rethink materiality, and provides a missed encounter with the body in thought. Deleuze makes a pertinent point in his *Bergsonism* (1988):

There is a correlation between life and matter, between expansion (*détente*) and contraction, which shows the coexistence of their respective degrees in the virtual whole, and their essential relativity in the process of actualization. Each line [of actualization or differentiation] is related to a type of matter that is *not merely an external environment, but in terms of which the living being manufactures a body, a form for itself*⁵³

From his reading of Bergson, as through his reading of Spinoza, Deleuze develops the notion of a differentiation of difference in terms of positivity or affirmation, and creation.

⁵³ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Constantin Boundas (New York: Zone Books, 1988) p. 103.

In Bergson he finds the resources for his understanding of the virtual continuum, as a potential to be actualised, not opposed to the real but also not limited to the resemblance bound up with perception on the classical model of possible experience. Deleuze states in *Difference and Repetition* that “[t]he elementary concepts of representation are the categories defined as the conditions of possible experience. These, however, are *too general or too large for the real*... Everything changes once we determine the conditions of real experience, which are not larger than the conditioned and which differ in kind from the categories” (68).

I regard the virtual in Deleuze as expressing the insight that genesis must be thought outside the transcendent instance which is part of the world it determines. Genesis is not just thinkable as genesis *from*. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze develops this point over the question of extensity in a manner close to the terms of Henry’s analyses.

Extensity does not develop or appear without presenting a left and a right, a high and a low, which are like the dissymmetrical marks of its own origin. The relativity of these determinations, moreover, is further *testimony to the absolute* from which they come. Extensity as a whole comes from the depths. Depth as the ultimate and heterogeneous dimension is the matrix of all extensity [...] The ground [*fond*] as it appears in a homogeneous extensity is notably a projection of something deeper [*profond*] [...] The extensity whose genesis we are attempting to establish is extensive magnitude, the *extensum* or term of reference of all the *extensio*. The original depth, by contrast, is indeed space as a whole, but space as an *intensive quantity*, the pure *spatium* (229-30; my emphasis added to Deleuze’s).

Deleuze’s statements here amount to the assertion that creative action be conceived in terms of self-affection. In a transposition of vocabulary, creation and created are conceived here according to the logic of expression in Deleuze. The creation and created belong to the same ‘community’ of ‘essence’. In as much as appearance is animated by

the same force or principle as essence, 'the created' "is essentially related to what creates itself as distinct from the creation itself"⁵⁴.

I see these descriptions in Deleuze as pointing to precisely the self-animation of the *Life* productive of thought in Henry. Henry and Deleuze conceive of creation outside determinations by constitutive acts *of - to*; rather *there is action* – true creative action *is* self-affection. To the extent that virtual, pre-individual singularities resist subsumption by the generality of the concept and its organisation by intentional subjectivity, they are indeterminate transcendentals, or 'original transcendental content', with respect to consciousness. In semiotic terms, Deleuze refers to these transcendentals in terms of the indefinite article and the anonymity of the proper name. That is, this is not empirical indetermination, but "a determination of immanence or a transcendental determinability. The indefinite article cannot be the determination of the person without at the same time being the determination of the singular"⁵⁵. Deleuze's notion of energetic materiality, a certain virtual potential expressed in the physicality of existence, is the immanent life that produces subjectivities. A concept, for Deleuze, is but an instance of multiplicity, and the creativity of a concept can be traced back to a materiality before its individuation or co-ordination by transcendental subjectivity. Deleuze states: "The One (*L'Un*) is not the transcendent which can contain everything, even immanence, but is the immanent contained in the transcendental field. 'A' (*Un*) is always the index of a multiplicity: an event, a singularity, a life... Although a transcendent which falls outside the plane of immanence can always be invoked or even attributed to it, it remains the case that all transcendence is constituted uniquely in the immanent current of consciousness particular to this plane. Transcendence is always a product of immanence"⁵⁶. Transcendence, thought, is the product of an 'energetic materiality'. Immanent genesis refers to an

⁵⁴ See Gilles Deleuze, EP p. 333 on the logic of expression.

⁵⁵ Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life", p. 5.

⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life", p. 5. Deleuze points out that even Husserl recognises that being transcends consciousness in this manner, and remains transcendent, but this 'no wise alters the fact that it is conscious life alone, wherein everything transcendent becomes constituted , as something inseparable from consciousness...". Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 62, quoted in Gilles Deleuze, "Immanence", p. 6. I have already pointed out the paradox of transcendental determinations in Husserl via Derrida's reading.

unfolding plane, a transcendental which eludes the grasp of intentionality and cognition on the traditional account. According to Henry, life is this activity, matter is the 'continuum of its resistance', its non-spatial aspect – or non-figural rather – being equally force, resistance. Deleuze asserts in *Bergsonism* that "[w]hen the virtuality is actualized, is differentiated, is 'developed', when it actualizes and develops its parts, it does so according to lines that are divergent, but each of which corresponds to a particular degree in the virtual totality" (100):

[W]hat co-existed in the virtual ceases to co-exist in the actual and is distributed in lines or parts that cannot be summed up, each one retaining the whole, except from a certain perspective, a certain point of view. These lines of differentiation are therefore truly creative: They only actualize by inventing, they create in these conditions the physical, vital or psychical representative of the ontological level that they embody (101).

The constitutive interiority granted the subject as identified with the being of thought is rejected by Deleuze's analyses. Insofar as negativity and the disjunction of subject and object are produced in terms of the intentional direction of this interiority, classical phenomenology does not sufficiently recognise immanence. According to Deleuze, all that is, is modal variation – in *Difference and Repetition* he explains this in terms of simulacra as they deny negativity, or internalisation on the phenomenological model. While they do not 'contain' relations intrinsic to them, simulacra produces divergent relations. Subjectivity in Deleuze is constituted as *an* experience, the locus of the terms of experience insofar as these are understood according to a self-unfolding matrix, the differentiation of the virtual. *Affect* is the notion of a point of engagement of the virtual and actualisation and thus takes up the function of the Husserlian *noema* on Derrida's reading, as both *non-existent and real*⁵⁷. The limits of a generative potential are virtual: what *is* for Deleuze is generation or creation.

⁵⁷ As a name for the force involved in an experience of affectivity, this concept in Deleuze is meant to illustrate a creative potential as "man's non-human becoming" (WP 173). It is what Deleuze attempts to name by a concept of *life*, which is creation or actualisation of singular *tendencies* of a virtual potential.

Deleuze orients thought toward its real origins in the body. What is overlooked in T/thought are the unconscious many-faceted workings of the body – machinic, technological, human. In Deleuze, the activity of thought is viewed in terms of a *complication* of materiality and thought. Thought and body are viewed as expressions of “something in life prior to the definition of each”⁵⁸. Deleuze’s writings enable understanding of why it might be pertinent to theorise thought in terms of what, with regard to Spinoza in particular, he considers to be its powers. His analyses show a necessary shift in emphasis from definitions regarding the laws of operation of thought to the powers and capacities of thought, as they must be sought in thought’s imbrication with the affects of the body. What is valuable in Deleuze is his providing of a theoretical site for the connections or potential syntheses of material processes and sentient experience *with* the effects expressed as abstract thought.

I would add here, as a point of contrast to what Deleuze’s thought does, that much of ‘the postmodern’ shares a certain flight from experience and from sentient experience perhaps more than anything. The ‘postmodern situation’ is perhaps most obviously marked by the digital becoming more real than the cellular. The issue of information transmission – the various methods and ever multiplying complexes of form-content – furthers focus on the relation between materiality and language. Various methods of transmission – codes, inscriptions, machines or correlatively genes, bodies, brains – ask for re-conceptualisations of the relation of matter and thought. In other words, the relation of matter and thought is continuously up for reevaluation.

The critique of the presuppositions of a T/thought which culminates in the analyses of classical phenomenology, presents an approach to corporeality that keeps in view the idea of what thought can do rather than what it is. Both Deleuze and Henry provide exceptional viewpoints in this regard, as they demonstrate an understanding of immanent genesis.

⁵⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues with Claire Parnet*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Athlone, 1987) p. 59.

For Deleuze, the question of being is, with respect to art, approached in terms of a genesis of immanence. In art, or the aesthetic, is preserved precisely the excess that is lost when philosophy or epistemology names it. Art can grasp this excess in its expression, and preserve, of the question of being as a being of the question. It is the *question* that is preserved in art. This is because art presents what is always outside the delimitations of thought, a process or genesis never reducible to its representations in thought. In Deleuze is apparent a particular aesthetic according to which 'process' takes precedence over form with regard to the question of being. Deleuze's 'physics', his exploration of the notions of intensity and singularity, represents an aesthetic which brings into philosophy precisely what it is forgetful of, an irreducible embodied life from which its concepts are a negative abstraction. This particular aesthetic poses the question of information transmission, as it points out the limitations of the Aristotelian schema of representation and the Kantian categories as these continue to delimit the idea of knowledge transmission.

Art, as materiality and body, is always beyond information and communication in the structure of traditional language; the idea of transmission of 'information' is posed rather in terms of construction – *expression* rather than articulation. The language of art is the conveyance of an outside of thought – the being of the sensible – as it is expressed in the body. The constructivism of Deleuze, his referral of concept formation, as all genesis, to the 'plane of immanence' or composition, returns genesis to the in-formation of the body, and so presents its challenge in terms of the forgetfulness of the outside of T/thought.

Michel Henry's critique of classical phenomenology's understanding of the relations between monstration, phenomenon and language, puts in question the particular identifications which amount to the 'emergence of the outside' reduced to the appearing of 'the world itself', determined by phenomenology's act-intentionality and object manifestation and the general concepts of representation. This critique has resonance with the work of Henri Michaux, and I take this up in chapter five. Michaux's painting and works of prose/poetry examine and question the rigid geometrism of the constellations that go under the name of intentionality, the outside of thought and the relation between otherness and self-awareness. Comparatively, Levinas expresses an insight common to Henry, Deleuze and Michaux, that "sensation and aesthetic effect produce the things in

themselves, but not as objects of a higher power; in side-stepping all objects they open up a new element foreign to the distinction of a 'without from a within'"⁵⁹. With Deleuze's conception of the Fold, there is no *Other* side in the sense of a general other. *There is* only the virtuality of the event, the immanent differentiation and the emergence of specific others. This particularity that pertains to material being is expressed in art. The question of immanent genesis is posed as the possibility of thinking the singularity of heterogeneous location, immanence or difference in itself.

If art is not about information it is because information is about error and correctness according to a politics of opinion. And language, conceived in terms of semiotics, works on recognition and translation, and so does not account for the outside of thought according to Henry and Deleuze. Henry's notion of a language of revelation operates according to a conception of affectivity that asks a further question of point of view. In his "Pathos and Language" is presented a notion of language that escapes the confines and authority of intentional consciousness. Language is, on this account, no longer an instrument but determined, in Deleuze's words, by what 'flashes across the intervals' when communication 'takes place between dispartes' (DR 20). This notion of language grasps an aspect of signification that makes up processes of embodied being, 'a physical process of signaling' (20). It is language which, rather than being dependent on recognition and resemblance – identity and analogy – according to a generality of the concept, withdraws from these in so far as it founds them. I will take up this point in chapter five with regard to Michaux's art.

(c) Affectivity and the Orientation of Thought.

⁵⁹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, p. 54.

In conclusion to this chapter, I want to point out the implications of some of the differences between Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas with regard to the theme of immanent genesis.

As for the possibility of thinking the singularity of heterogeneous location, difference in itself, Merleau-Ponty's immanent ontology differs from the immanent ontology of Deleuze and from Henry's analyses in a way that detracts from this possibility. Merleau-Ponty's analyses reorient thought towards its origins in the body. He is concerned to de-intellectualise the specific 'interiority' or capacity of the subject in traditional transcendental philosophy. He shares this concern with Deleuze and Levinas. However, the con-fusion of the sensible and the intelligible that is a consequence of his notion of flesh, does little to support the notion of heterogeneous location or an understanding of *orientation* with regard to the relation between the sensible and thought. In Merleau-Ponty the interiority of the subject is understood as interior to experience or 'life', but this is conceived in a manner that undermines a notion of affectivity that would allow us to think 'difference in itself'. The lines are too blurred in Merleau-Ponty. His analyses provide an important conception of the in-visible, the idea that genesis is not fully available to the directions of transcendental consciousness and the 'visibility' afforded by the supposed access to its 'objects'. Merleau-Ponty states in *The Visible and the Invisible*: "the transcendental... goes beyond subjectivity in the sense of counter-transcendence and immanence" (VI 172). This notion of counter-transcendence is too schematic and abstract to provide an adequate notion of immanent genesis. Merleau-Ponty's notion of an intentionality within being cannot adequately account for the manner in which thought is affected according to the otherness which marks bodily being with regard to self-awareness. The in-visible in Merleau-Ponty is understood strictly in terms of this hyphen, it is the invisible of the visible. That is, flesh is all-encompassing.

This all-encompassing flesh is problematic because it leaves no possibility for thinking potentials of T/thought in terms of its orientation. That is, what an adequate notion of immanent genesis provides is an understanding of thought with regard to a positioning or orientation with respect to affectivity. Merleau-Ponty provides a notion of a corpo-real,

which is necessary to account for affectivity. However, this corporeality does not account for affectivity in terms of the absolute divergence or otherness it implies in the formation of consciousness. Merleau-Ponty's immanent ontology reconceives the transcendental in a manner that does not account for difference, only relative divergence. It is difficult to think relations and the singular within this philosophy of the flesh. That is, it is difficult to think immanent genesis without a difference between thought, and the sensible excess that the traditional conception of the transcendental attempts to subsume.

Merleau-Ponty's immanent ontology takes the form of a continual displacement of genesis. Genesis is neither here nor there. With a view to the difference of Deleuze's immanent ontology, my argument is that Merleau-Ponty's notion of reversibility is marked by impotence with respect to the production of the new. If subjectivity is the "privileged bearer" (VI 274) of transcendence or Being *as the implication of absolute continuity*, Merleau-Ponty's ontology cannot account for immanent genesis in its productive capacity with respect to thought. My argument is that the importance of Deleuze, Henry and Levinas's analyses of affectivity is that these provide a conception of why thought must be judged according to its positioning in terms of affectivity. Merleau-Ponty's do not.

Merleau-Ponty recognises, like Levinas, that I am always already more than my self or my life. That this is so is a consequence of the fact that my life is also not mine, but in a specific sense given to me before a positing of me as my-self. While Merleau-Ponty's analyses do not account for the otherness that gives rise to such a situation, Levinas's analyses most elaborately insist on it. The relevance of Levinas, which is a thinker of transcendence, not immanence, lies with his provisions for thinking affectivity, the positioning of thought with regard to affectivity. What I mean by this is that his analyses compel Thought to take into account the relation between its being and affectivity.

The analyses of the life of the body depend in Merleau-Ponty on an all-encompassing ontology of the flesh; in Levinas the life of the body is approached according to what he calls the psyche⁶⁰. The psyche in Levinas refers to affectivity as the condition of inter-

subjectivity, and disruption of the language of thought. Levinas radicalises the implication of passivity and exposure to otherness in the Deleuzian insight that the lived body is 'not enclosed by its own skin'. Subjectivity is signified according to the perspective of the subjective body in its radical exposure to Alterity. In Levinas, the emphasis on the responsiveness to otherness lies with the other person, and ethical intersubjectivity. This relation gives an account of affectivity that supports rather than undermines – as would seem obvious by an account of the transcendence of the Other – the conditions for thinking immanent genesis; thought is always already 'scripted' in the encounter with another⁶¹. The argument for (re-) orientation in thought with regard to affectivity extends to the emergence and recognition of Alterity in its specificity or particularity. The analyses by Levinas, Deleuze and Henry are relevant to the extent that they radically question thought that cannot account for otherness in other than general terms, according to a subjectivity which *is* enclosed in its own skin. Affectivity, as inseparable from a *positioning* of thought in a *corporeal sense* is the key to recover a misplaced ethos with respect to traditional transcendental philosophy.

⁶⁰ The analyses in Merleau-Ponty regarding the differentiation of the lived body and the body as object is of course implied by these different critiques of classical phenomenology. It would be impossible to think the notion of affectivity without it.

⁶¹ I raise this point in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Orientation in Thought: Affectivity, Ethics And Aesthetics

I. Affectivity: Orientation in Levinas

Emmanuel Levinas is the philosopher of our time who has most explicitly oriented philosophy toward its missed encounter with the alterity of the other person. More than anyone else, he has directed his attention to the specificity and singularity of the Other, seeing that a certain forgetfulness of radical alterity has led to a reduction of the meaning of subjectivity. The absorption in our time of the singularity of the individual into units of various forms of institution has brought about a reduction of the individual, stripped of his real significance for a registration as a generalisable abstraction in systems of thought or discourse. A radical abstraction, such as that which replaced the corporeal significance of the individual as a subject during the period of Nazism, has historically been repeated in various political-ideological and religious discourses. The well-known result of the particular abstractions of Nazism were the concentration camps and the mass extermination of individuals subsumed under the general category of the Jews, identified by the Star of David quite literally attached to persons as a mark of a generalisable unit of human beings. The meaning of the integrity of the subjective body of individuals, the corporeal meaning of their subjectivity, disappeared from view. The specificity and singularity of subjectivity is continually put under erasure through a generalisation, according to which physical subjectivity becomes dispensable. Levinas's 'ethics as first philosophy' is very much marked by this question of a reduced subjectivity. His philosophy positions itself as an orientation in thought toward a formulation of subjectivity, which respects the corporeal meaning and integrity of the individual. Levinas's entire work brings philosophy to the question of an ethical approach to

subjectivity. For Levinas, this question of ethical approach is directed towards Alterity in the terms of moral inter-subjectivity; the alterity of the other person, the Other or *Autrui*, justifies my subjectivity, my being as my-self, and so acts as a directive to the question of the meaning of subjectivity. The *signification* of the other person, his significance as a corporeal other, determines the sense of my subjectivity before subjectivity in general. This understanding of the terms signification and sense criticises phenomenological methodology, which accords the phenomenologically reduced sphere of meaning access to the structures and meaning of subjectivity¹. For Levinas, the reductions of phenomenology preempt the real significance of the Other and the relations of affective being which give rise to subjectivity.

What is important in the notion of affectivity or affection is the *relation* between transcendence and immanence. The question of beginnings so pertinent to phenomenological methodology is suspended by Levinas for a sense of 'beginning' prior to phenomenological origins². The previous chapters of this work have shown how the question of origins in phenomenology and much of the philosophical tradition has meant re-presenting 'presence' according to what Derrida criticises as the illusion of immediacy

¹ I refer to Levinas's discussion of the relation between psychology and phenomenology, and the issue of 'psychologism or 'relativisation' of truth/knowledge as it came to occupy the later Husserl and his insistence on the difference between psychology and the absolute knowledge available to phenomenological science. See especially the end of chapter seven in Emmanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Andre Orianne (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973). Levinas questions the 'reach' of phenomenological methodology. Levinas, like Husserl, does not grant psychology any real access to significations or meaning. However, for Levinas, neither does the phenomenological bracketing of the 'natural attitude' along with its insistence on the reflective awareness of consciousness. According to Levinas, the restriction set by reducing the origins of meaning formation to the confines of consciousness, is no less 'psychology'. The spheres of signification which give rise to the self, do not begin with(in) consciousness, but according to concrete conditions of our corporeal being, or our physical exposure to alterity as singular beings. This chapter ends with what is Levinas's point of departure for his philosophy, the insufficient approach to inter-subjectivity in Husserl, the ultimate meaning of which for Levinas, is ethical rather than ontological or epistemological.

² Ultimately, Levinas's critique of classical phenomenology and specifically Husserl's theory of intuition argues that 'intuition' on Husserl's account does not, as it supposes, give the origins of subjectivity or inter-subjectivity. Like Henry and Derrida, Levinas recognises that consciousness and intuition cannot achieve the origin for itself 'by itself'. Affectivity accounts for immanent genesis beyond the supposed immediacy of meaning-formation in intuition. Human being begins with sensibility and time understood according to the disruption of self-presence by alterity/ 'proximity'. Levinas writes in "The I and Totality" that "if self-knowledge rests on conditions, no knowledge, even reflective, even psychoanalytic, has a beginning" (31) in the sense of origins on the classical account. Emmanuel Levinas, 'The I and Totality' in *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 13-38.

to consciousness and which he contests according to the *différance* of presence. Levinas's notion of the 'trace', the meaning of which Derrida takes up, disagrees with the fullness of such representation; it is incomplete and must necessarily be so³. For Levinas, the 'tracing' of diachrony accounts for an excess of sensible being, unavailable to the structures of representation and the phenomenologically reduced subject-matter. Levinas's particular ethico-phenomenological account of subjectivity is ultimately an account of *sensibility*, and this (notion of) sensibility puts in question the coherence of the 'world' given by the account of consciousness in classical phenomenology. Sensibility is, as in Deleuze, originary with respect to the formation and meaning of subjectivity. Continuing the work of the earlier *Totality and Infinity* (1969)⁴, Levinas's *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1981)⁵ orients thought to its exterior⁶, a sensibility and a relation to radical Alterity according to which subjectivity emerges. That is, the ethics of philosophy in Levinas is awareness of its sensible dimension, and proposes a disruption of the classical relation of language and consciousness by sensibility.

Levinas defines sensibility as a "changing of being into signification" (OB 17). Subjectivity qua signification – the 'Saying' rather than the 'said' established as essence in discourse – suspends essence qua the disinterestedness of one-for-another. "As

³ In the 1968 essay "Différance" Derrida refers explicitly to Levinas. Levinas states that the passage of a trace – of otherness – involves an absolving of self. On Levinas's definition, the trace leaves a trace/mark as effacement of presentable traces. Effacement is what constitutes the trace, a certain absence irreducible to the distinction between absence and presence, because it does not belong to the realm of appearances (for consciousness). Levinas describes it as occurring "by overprinting" by which he means an excess of affective being. See Levinas, "The Trace of the Other" trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) p. 357. In "Differance", Derrida writes of the "interval" which is a condition for the present in that what appears in presence "is related to something other than itself" (13). This interval is what Derrida calls the "arche-trace" and must be understood according to what withdraws in appearance, as a "change of site" (24). See Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982).

⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981). Hereafter referred to as OB.

⁶ Exterior, as in not accounted for in its categories of representation and intellection according to phenomenological subjectivity.

signification, proximity⁷, saying, separation, I do not fuse with anything" (14). Signification is 'prior to being' according to the correlations of consciousness and as such "breaks up the assembling, the recollection or the present of essence" (14). This breakup of identity, of essence or the self-presence of consciousness, is what Levinas calls ethics. The 'changing of being into signification' is what this ethics names 'substitution', or the subject's exposure and subjection to *its* outside, its radical passivity with respect to an excess of sensible being: in other words, sensibility. Human being is radically implicated in sensibility. This sensibility speaks of an affectivity that comes from the Other, of a passivity which lets us speak of this sensibility as a self-alterity which marks the corporeal. Corporeal being, as 'always being in the presence of transcendence'⁸, of Alterity, starts with a separation.

When Levinas, in *Discovering Existence with Husserl and Heidegger* (1988), interprets Husserl's 'originary impression'⁹, he speaks of a passivity coinciding with the beginning's 'spontaneous genesis' in the *event* of the present (142-4). In concordance with the notion of sensibility we find in Deleuze, 'the new' comes from outside consciousness. Genesis starts with a separation with respect to a sensibility, which places both the passivity and the activity of 'spontaneous genesis' with what is different from consciousness, that is, according to a necessary discontinuity in internal time-consciousness. This gives rise to what we have spoken of as the otherness of self-awareness, the presence of alterity which gives rise to subjectivity. Pre-intentional, an originary sensibility is inseparable from the presence of alterity, and introduces the difference that allows us to understand time in terms of retention and protention. It is thus a relationship with signification in the broad sense – an expressivity or Saying brought about by a separation in the manner in which I am *positioned* in the world as embodied

⁷ 'Proximity' in Levinas refers to the relation of one-for-the-other, an exposure without 'mediation', an absolute anterior relation, which is a 'condition' of all signification, an original contamination inseparable from an orientation of the body.

⁸ Recall Michel Henry in *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, p. 187. – See chapter two of this thesis, p. 38 as well as chapter three, p. 10.

⁹ See Emmanuel Levinas, "Intentionality and Sensation", in *Discovering Existence with Husserl and Heidegger*, trans. Richard E. Cohen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

being – that gives rise to subjectivity. Levinas's insight is that sensibility is not something that we project on the world, nor a project with regard to the world. The critique in Levinas, as well as Deleuze, Henry and Derrida of the primacy and supposed sufficiency of 'representation' and intentionality, points to the fact that it propounds the reductive view that the only intelligible world is one that is determined – preformed – according to our projects or the active intervention of cognition¹⁰. Levinas's notion of sensibility – or 'Saying' – disrupts the thematisation involved in such projects of representation. When Levinas speaks of the violence of discourse, of the thematisations of 'the said' ascribed meanings, what he refers to is actually the 'violence' in supposing the world of our projects as primary and sufficient to make up the meaning of subjective being. The 'violence' refers furthermore to the fact that 'Saying' or sensibility always disrupts, but exists in a 'necessary relation of interdependence' with, totalising representational structures¹¹. What discourse presents is always marked by a violence, like 'metaphysics' in Derrida's account. Whereas, according to Levinas, subjectivity qua knowing and the structures of representation is "subordinated to the sense of objectivity" (OB 132). On the other hand, the expression of the Saying is necessarily given by the structures of the said. It becomes absorbed in thematisation and ascribed meaning, as we always respond to the sensible world in terms of meaningful structures. 'The Saying' is the expressivity or sensibility of an 'infinite infinite', or what is always already in excess of 'the said'. The problem of language is described by Levinas in similar terms to Michel Henry's:

The correlation of the saying and the said, that is, the subordination of the saying to the said, to the linguistic system and to ontology, is the price that manifestation demands. In language qua said everything is conveyed before us, be

¹⁰ The following sentence from *Otherwise than Being* represents what Levinas questions in such an account of the position of subjectivity vis-à-vis the world: "A subject would then be a power for re-presentation in the quasi-active sense of the word: it would draw up the temporal disparity into a present, a simultaneousness" (133). The problem is that "the assembling of being in the present, its synchronization by retention, memory and history, is representation; *it does not integrate the responsibility for the separated entity*" (140). The call of the Other, sensibility and separation, "does not arise out of... any recallable present" (140). The specific temporality of Alterity and what we have called 'the otherness of self-awareness' in the previous two chapters, are not recuperable in the Husserlian present, in representation.

¹¹ For the relation of 'the Saying' and 'the said' in Levinas, see *Otherwise than Being*, especially pp. 31-48.

it at the price of a betrayal (OB 6).

Levinas, as much as Henry, argues that language restricted to 'the said' of phenomenological discourse, misses a crucial signification pertaining to the sensible excess of being. The cognition of being born(e) in the said is forgetful of Saying: "The identity of entities refers to a saying teleologically turned to the kerygma of the said, absorbing itself in it to the extent of being forgotten in it. It refers to a saying that would be *correlative* with the said..." (37). As 'correlative' with the said, this saying would "coagulate the flow of time... take up a position with regard to a 'something', fixed in a present, represent it to itself and thus extract from it the labile character of time" (37). Again in Levinas we encounter here his critique of the schematics pertaining to the relation of intentionality and representation; identification occurs according to the logic of 'scientific language' in which what is in excess of cognition and thematisation, (a signification or sensibility which belongs to language in a broader sense), is reabsorbed in an 'already said' (36-37). Language is irreducible to the 'verbal artifices' or rhetoric of the language of thematisation (6). Saying is not exhausted by the thematisations of this discourse. Sensibility undercuts these thematisations. Levinas argues in "The I and Totality" (1954), that the face signifies in a manner which involves 'faith', "which does not mean here a second source of knowledge but which is assumed by every theoretical statement"¹². What he means is that the 'absolute' or the 'fixed point' is the absolute of a concrete embodied being, not affirmation of truth in the statements of discourse, 'a truth about beings': "Language cannot encompass the other: the other, the concept of whom we are using at this very moment, is not invoked as a concept, but as a person"¹³. That is, language begins with sensibility.

Sensibility, as the mark of a corpo-reality, intervenes in cognitive language and the projects of intentionality and re-presentation. That is, before language is language as we

¹² Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre-Nous, On Thinking-of-the-Other*, p. 32.

¹³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre-Nous*, p. 32. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas states that the "reference to an interlocutor permanently breaks through the text that the discourse claims to weave in thematizing and enveloping all things" (170).

traditionally know it, linguistic and logical, it is an exposure and relation to what is Other, 'saying' as "exposure without reserve to the other" (168). In *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Levinas makes the point as follows: Saying or "speaking, rather than 'letting be', solicits the Other" (195). The language of cognition and the structure of intentionality are secondary with respect to this *affective* relation. Levinas notes that "intentionality remains an aspiration to be filled, and fulfillment, the centripetal movement of a consciousness that coincides with itself" (62). These are movements that disregard the intervention of alterity, and the sensibility through which we respond to the corporeal situation of being-for-another. The encounter with alterity – self-alterity and the alterity of the other person – happens in "a time that does not enter into the unity of transcendental apperception" (140). The Levinasian trace – diachrony – refers to a movement of signification anterior to consciousness, an immanent genesis of meaning. That is, exposure and sensibility elicit a response that disrupts the formal structures of logic. Alterity orders the ethical relation as the corpo-reality of what escapes my freedom: "The signification of what escapes my freedom is the defeat or defecting of the unity of transcendental apperception" (179; 140-41). The otherness of self-awareness is what elicits subjectivity according to the experience that "I, the same, am torn up from my beginning in myself, my equality with myself" (184). Levinas understands the stakes of sensibility or affectivity as follows; the experience of alterity is given in the terms of responsibility, or the verb 'to respond', and in this response lies the meaning of subjectivity. Accordingly, "the glory of the Infinite is this responsibility" (144), "anarchic identity", a positioning for or as affectivity, a certain beginning before origins (144): "essence is undone in signification" (140).

Significantly, this 'glory', or singular being of the Other, "could not appear" (144). Levinas's critique of modern 'subject-object epistemology', in which our Being is reducible to being-object, questions its delimitation by the privilege of the metaphor of vision. This metaphor represents the forgetfulness of our corporeality and creation beyond the manner in which vision – the phenomenon of manifestation on the classical account – affords a source of knowledge. Levinas characterises responsibility in terms of "the giving of signs" (144); affectivity or the one-for-the-other is the true situation of

knowledge. In Levinas, infinity points to radical alterity; the infinity of the other is his subjectivity as Other. The ethical relation is a return to a concrete reality lost in epistemological discourse in so far as the latter seeks 'origins' in consciousness. Infinity is the transcendence introduced as the particular relationship with an Other; it is response to a singular being rather than to the abstractions of Being. Levinas's account of Alterity demonstrates how theoretical being is always already the situation of particular material being. 'The face' of the Other is for Levinas the mark of Alterity, but the particular face reveals infinity, it infinitely orders me to respond. According to Levinas, 'the face' signifies prior to our projecting light upon it¹⁴. The face affords response as a particular intentionality; Levinas states that "the intentionality that animates the idea of infinity is not compatible with any other; it aims at what it cannot embrace, and is in this sense, the infinite"¹⁵. That is, irreducible to a beginning in the present of representation, "as infinitude of infinity, it comes from a past more distant than that which is within the reach of memory, and is lined up with the present" (OB 144), and this *is its positivity*. Infinity escapes objectivity and disrupts 'objectivising', theoretical consciousness. In *Ethics and Infinity* (1985), Levinas describes the relation to the Infinite as 'not a knowledge but a desire'¹⁶ and situates Infinity firmly within a material situation, the corporeality of our being. In this manner Levinas is able to account for a corpo-real that Husserlian phenomenology is not.

¹⁴ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 74. Levinas defines language in a broad sense as "the coinciding of the revealer and the revealed in the face" (67).

¹⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity", in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p. 54.

¹⁶ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985) p. 92. Levinas points out how in Descartes the thought of the Infinite puts reason in a position to receive. However, "In Descartes the idea of the Infinite remains a theoretical idea, a contemplation, a knowledge. For my part, I think that the relation to the Infinite is not a knowledge but a Desire" (92).

(a) Body and 'Psyche': The circuits of Sensibility and Affectivity

The emphasis of Levinas's account of the ethical relation is that of the Life of the subjective body, beyond theoretical representation of objects, or what Levinas calls the 'psyche'. What is important about this concept of the 'psyche' and the ethical relation in Levinas's account, is that they demonstrate the radical degree to which subjectivity is never 'enclosed in its own skin', but exposed in a sense which takes seriously the notion of embodiedness. It is this embodiedness, thought according to its 'regard for' exteriority against much of the philosophical tradition, which sets Levinas's thought apart. It is also what links him to Deleuze and Derrida. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas speaks of 'true discourse' as an "original relation with exterior being [and a] production of meaning" (66).

Levinas's theory of ethical subjectivity draws the Husserlian subject out of its essence as 'inner consciousness' and transcendental ego, into relations of sensibility in which the external and the 'internal' enter into constant circuits. Ethical subjectivity is a theory of the self according to which phenomenological ego-consciousness is no longer foundational but preceded by the exteriority of responsibility. Levinasian sensibility works on the presupposition that what Husserl called intentional affectivity – beside cognitional and volitional intentionality – is preceded by a non-intentional affectivity. The temporality of response and responsibility in Levinas is a re-orientation of subjectivity against its reduction to the sufficiency of its self-presence. The import of exteriority does not cancel out interiority, it enters into a 'circuit' with it¹⁷. That is, subjectivity comes 'after the fact'; it is delayed with regard to the physical reality of an inter-subjective world, which is not reducible to an object of subjectivity's autonomous creation. The face of the Other, the meaning of its expressivity, disrupts the identity of the ego-consciousness in so far as it exceeds its meaning-bestowing autonomy, its

¹⁷ Such circuits are, as I see it, close to what is expressed by Deleuze's 'energetic materiality'. I argue that Levinasian non-intentional affectivity is lent depth by this notion. Deleuze's notion of energetic materiality puts into question the demarcations of the mediated world, such as the relation of object and subject, inside and outside.

'freedom' according to the tradition culminating in Husserlian phenomenology. As suggested in the previous chapters, the presence of transcendence involves a certain forgetfulness of ego-consciousness. It also involves a certain forgetfulness of logical orientation, that is, thought bound by 'possible experience' according to *mediation* by the categories in traditional representational thought. The response elicited by the face of the other is of a non-cognitive sort; it cannot be reduced to the contents of an intuition or a concept. Affective orientation before intentionality is a susceptibility and a passivity, which always already mark our corporeal situation, our exposure to a creation or genesis not accessible or assimilable according to our cognitive capacity. A singularity exceeds the interiority of the subject, but is inseparable from a life of the body, and the judging capacity of emotions¹⁸. Affectivity and response are always before the self, and recur infinitely as the interruption of its self-sustenance. There is thus immanent creation exterior to the 'subjectivity' of ego-consciousness. Beyond object-determination and the reflection of human reason, there is a singular genesis and individuation that give rise to subjectivity. In Levinas, the notion of singularity is inseparable from moral obligation or responsibility, and so the singular and the social are both understood according to this originary event of lived, rather than conceptualised, inter-subjectivity. Levinas's 'psyche' demonstrates the reality of a subjectivity that questions the stability of ego-consciousness, by what he expresses throughout *Otherwise than Being* as the 'other-in-the same' and the 'other in me'. These abstract formulae point to the reality of singular creation outside the parameters of this ego-consciousness¹⁹. In this sense we can speak of immanent genesis.

Levinas's notion of the psyche refers to that sensibility which exceeds Husserlian intentionality, in other words, the reality of a non-intentional affectivity. The 'psyche' is on this account not what is equal to consciousness but what exceeds or interrupts it as the 'time of the other' – 'diachrony'. Time is inseparable from embodiment, understood as the sensible susceptibility to the other; this morally responsible body, in all its singularity and reality as flesh, is what Levinas calls the 'maternal body'. That is, I am as body,

¹⁸ See Chapter three, p. 25. This is precisely the point regarding the body that Deleuze takes from Spinoza.

¹⁹ Levinas's main writings on the notion of the psyche are found in chapter three of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*.

infinitely responsible for the 'other in me'. Levinas states: "Indeed in the transcendence of intentionality diachrony is reflected, that is, the psyche itself, in which inspiration of the same by the other is articulated as a responsibility for another, in proximity" (OB 67). The psyche is moral responsiveness, the one-for-the other or the reality of proximity. Proximity signifies a relation anterior to meaning bestowal; the "approach"²⁰ of a singularity is a relation without the mediation of a principle of intuition or of ideality. According to Levinas, it is this concrete situation which gives rise to self-awareness. This ethical relation exceeds philosophy understood as the thematisation of epistemology and the establishment of ontological relation. "The very pneuma of the psyche, alterity in identity, is the identity of a body exposed to the other, becoming 'for the other', the possibility of giving" (69). What is important in this passage and Levinas's other descriptions of the psyche is the very vulnerability of the body and its orientation, the fact of its 'complicity' – without the intentional overtones of that word – with a creation anterior to consciousness. The genesis of meaning begins with the situation of the body, one-for-the-other because the signification implied by this situation is other than what is taken up – 'after the fact' – by consciousness in reflection. This is why Levinas insists on the distinction between 'the Saying and the said'. For Levinas, signification exterior to the system of language according to speech-acts and linguistics, is inseparable from the ethical relation: that is, it is responsiveness to what is not mine, nor of my command. The signifyingness of the "affective", "active", and the sensible as inscribed "in a system, in the said, and in the simultaneity of a particular language, is borrowed from this prior psyche, which is signifyingness par excellence" (69). The important point made is that a situation pertaining to the life of the subjective body is at the root of all signification. When Levinas speaks of this situation according to an animation of the body, it is "not a metaphor" (70), and does not involve mediation by consciousness. A fundamental passivity is the reality of a corpo-real, which undergoes a genesis that eludes object-oriented phenomenology. Singular creation, according to the forces that animate the subjective body, gives us an understanding of individuation that defies the categories of representational thought and the notion of objectivity in classical phenomenology. The

²⁰ Levinas speaks of the mutation of the intentional into the ethical as an infinite movement "where approach *pierces* consciousness" as "the surface of the human face" (DEH 225).

same point is expressed by Henry, of the need to orient thought beyond 'the world' and 'being' according to the classical conception²¹. In this sense, immanent genesis is that which cannot be objectively given, a force of creativity, which animates the *life* of human being²². The illusions of 'objectivity' are the illusions projected according to phenomenological light, as it obscures an immediate subjective reality, which Levinas emphasises as emphatically not mine. The important point raised by conceiving a life of the body in terms of affection and sensibility, singular individuation, is that subjectivity is always already in excess of any generalisable unit of being. Subjectivity is entirely other than a particular instance of a generalisable abstraction exhausted as an object in representation and reflection. The reality of subjectivity is its complicity with a creative principle. This is a principle of excess, sensibility, and the reality of immanent genesis. According to the question of immanent genesis the body is the 'reality' rather than the 'medium' of life's auto-affection, to use an expression from Henry again.

(b) Signification Other than Phenomenological Abstraction

Levinas's notion of the excess of an absolute alterity could be considered to be an abstraction according to the logic of traditional discursive philosophy. However, I argue that this would not be an accurate reading of the notion. Levinas's notion of alterity is very much other than an abstraction. The relation with the face of the other is not an object cognition; the "transcendence of the face is at the same time its absence from this world into which it enters" (TI 75). The face signifies otherwise than that which can be

²¹ Accordingly, the meaning of the play of difference in Derrida is 'unlimited' because it precedes the question of the world as such, it 'transcends' the world as 'contained' by the philosophical tradition. Levinas states in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* that the face is not accessible as "object-cognition. The transcendence of the face is at the same time its absence from this world into which it enters" (75).

²² I'll end this section with a comment on Deleuze, who in *The Logic of Sense* speaks of a project for philosophy in tracing the manners in which "the individual would be able to transcend his form and his syntactical link with a world" in order to understand how a "non-organic life of things... burns us" (178).

taken up in reflection, recuperated or disclosed in discourse. The idea of Infinity, the 'signifyingness' of the face is revealed, not thematised or disclosed (TI 62). 'The face' is the excess consequent of an anterior sensibility that eludes Husserlian constitution. Levinas describes the manifestation of the Other as a "coinciding of the expressed with him who expresses" (66). 'Signifyingness', or genesis of meaning, occurs outside the parameters of phenomenological meaning-bestowal because it is entirely anterior to this activity of consciousness, and concerns an 'animation' of the body, a *sense* of otherness prior to the determination of meaning by constitutional logic. The signification of the face does not 'belong' to the horizons of the 'world' or the 'ways of the world' thus constituted. The signifyingness of the face transcends culture and is anterior to any historical language. Levinas's interpretation of the other insists on its transcendence of the 'world', and understands the latter as the discursive truth of what has already been said²³. What Levinas wants to emphasise is the absolute anteriority of the manner in which we live from a material or corpo-real situation and the significations that pertain to this situation²⁴. The urgency of ethics is its priority, in both senses of the word, to ontology and epistemology. The reality of the face is concrete, immediate; it pertains immediately – without mediation on the classical model – to embodied inter-subjectivity,

²³ Levinas's theory of language deals with the problem of transcendent meaning given within the parameters of the 'world', recognising that the world is 'resistant' to transcendence in so far as no phenomenon can include in itself through 'manifestation' that which cannot appear. The activity of discursive language, as it repeats the appropriation of the world by act-intentionality, is expressed by Levinas as "the way being borrows in order to show itself", an over-determination by the "*logos* as rationality". See Emmanuel Levinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, pp. 217-18. Language in the narrow sense and according to Husserlian phenomenology serves to repeat or 'communicate' what has already been established in intuition. Levinas states, however: "Meaning neither given nor non-given is intended. But it is starting with meaning that being is manifested as being" (218). Levinas directs us to the signification or 'signifyingness' which is language in a broader sense and which, because it eludes this activity of intentional language, is 'beyond being', not of the 'world' or the onto-thematic event that is the disorientation or detour of ideality. The problem with the postulation of the essence of a universal truth in intuition is that this set up of ideality assumes that everything can be known; that understanding and perception are synonymous; and that objectivity is what is given to consciousness, exhausted in its significance as the epistemologically willed. 'Proximity' complicates the classical conception of intentionality; it refers to a "relation between terms where the one and the other are united neither by a synthesis of the understanding nor by the relation of subject to object and where nevertheless the one weighs or matters or is significant to the other" (225), that is they are tied by something "knowledge" cannot exhaust.

²⁴ Levinas states in *Totality and Infinity*: "We live from life, exist by means of matter" (TI 82- 86). This is the single most important point made in *Totality and Infinity*. The abstractions of discursive thought must take this *situation* into consideration in a specific manner. What classical phenomenology does not recognize sufficiently is that the corpo-real cannot be abstracted *from* constitutional ego-consciousness.

and the singular relation of the one-for-the-other. As time is the very structure of subjectivity – the time of ‘diachrony’, the absolute anteriority of the other person effects subjectivity as the disruption of inner time consciousness. Response and responsibility are in this sense the very essence of time, and ‘come before’ discursive consciousness and philosophy. The alterity of the Other is not accessible as the epistemologically willed; it is an imperative for responsibility which affects our bodily being before any self-correcting epistemological impetus, or what we call the intellect in cognition and reflection. Human being is first of all openness and vulnerability in face of a signification that affects prior to the ‘certainties’ of self-identity. The signification of alterity is described by Levinas as “proximity”, “dia-chrony”, and “non-indifference”. While these may be abstract terms, the ethical relation they refer to is anything but abstract. Rather, the ethical relation is deeply rooted in the manner in which we are first of all embodied beings, answerable to the affections of embodied life in all their particularities. Levinas designates the signifyingness of the face and its affect on me – in the ‘accusative’ –as the premise of moral inter-subjectivity.

Levinas’s essay, “Signification and Sense”²⁵ argues that signification exceeds the contents ‘given’ to consciousness in intuition. Just as in representation the ‘presence’ is already past, so the temporalisation of proximity is an anachronism to consciousness. The concreteness of the sensible, and the lived reality of sensible human being, signify as the approach of the face, is language or an engagement in life that precedes intentionality. Levinas’s critique of Husserl’s ‘intuitionism’ and intellectualism points to the ‘disorientation’ of classical phenomenology’s ‘return to the given’. Levinas points out that significations do not appear to consciousness as the given “placed on an illuminated horizon” (SS 11). The notions of horizon or ‘world’ in classical phenomenology detract from the immanence and singularity of a creation or signification beyond its illuminated boundaries conceived on the model of a context for consciousness (11). Levinas’s argument is that signification precedes the ‘givens’. “Signification cannot be inventoried

²⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, “Signification and Sense”, trans., Poller, in *Humanism of the Other* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003). Levinas’s essay is guided by Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on embodiment with regard to vision and signification.

in the interiority of thought" (16). Levinas follows the argument of Merleau-Ponty to a certain point, of the body as a 'sensing sensed' and "the fact that the body is immersed in the world that it thinks and consequently expresses this world as it thinks it" (16). The emphasis on embodiment in Levinas, however, is the emphasis on the separation – in proximity – which gives rise to affectivity and the response-emergence of subjectivity. This is the orientation which gives rise to the ethical relation, and which undercuts consciousness – and vision – as a privileged manner of access into the real. Levinas asks, "Does not sense, as orientation, indicate a thrust, an outside of self toward the *other than self*...? (25). Because embodied life precedes philosophy and precedes thought, we must look to the significance of the body, what a body can do, to conceive of an orientation in thought as "orientation – a sense – in [embodied] being that would unite univocality and freedom" (26).

Like Henry, Levinas orients us towards a 'freedom' of the subject in which thought is more than a 'theory of thought', or thematisation through the detour of idealism and the circular movement by which meanings are established for consciousness. 'Freedom' lies in the potential to respond to what is other than what consciousness already knows. The face invokes what is absent to consciousness and the knowing subject, that which is not already fixed by intuition. It invokes the presence of an irretrievable past and a yet-to-come future. Levinas quotes Leon Blum writing in prison in 1941, "We work *in* the present, not *for* the present" (28). Desire, or the "surplus that is inadequate to intentionality", or "thinking beyond what one thinks", the "idea of infinity" (33), these are the absent contents of consciousness. The face challenges the consciousness that sights it; it always exceeds its knowledge and as such is unassimilable. The face represents in this capacity a potential for creation, what is 'new' with respect to the formulas of 'the said'. "Infinity is not correlative to the idea of Infinity, as if that idea were an intentionality *accomplishing itself* in its 'object'. The marvel of infinity in the finitude of thought is an upheaval of intentionality, an upheaval of this appetite for light that is intentionality" (34). The relation with the other, the invocation by the face, does not comply with the act of unveiling being, as what is already there or 'said' in the discourse of representational consciousness. The approach by the face traces "the

rectitude of an orientation or sense" (34), which does not confuse the moment of return of consciousness with its birth (34). Levinas quotes Merleau-Ponty from a conference in 1957, as the latter refers to the problems posed by Husserl's phenomenological reduction: "Where does it come from, this resistance of the unreflected to reflection?" (34). The answer for Levinas, lies in these absent contents, the positivity of a Desire which is not prompted by a lack and is 'non-consumative', but is created by the approach of the face of the other. Merleau-Ponty also refuses to answer according to the finitude of the subject, but his account of an openness to a certain materiality of being is, as I have pointed out, left with the impasses of the notion of Flesh.

It is important to realise the anteriority of sense with regard to cultural-historical signification (36). The manner in which ideology and politico-religious discourse tend to operate with a conception of the abstract man in men (36) is precisely a result of a tendency to organise signs of culture into principles of abstraction regarding the human being. Subjectivity is subsumed in the generality of 'human being', stripped of the corporeal affects that inform individuation and lend particularity and significance to the individual, as subjectivity. This move to a sense brought about by corpo-reality is importantly different from Husserlian reduction. It is a move toward a naked significance that is not forgetful of the affects of the body, but recognises what being a body means. The body holds the potential of access and realisation with regard to the meaning of the absolutely Other. The subjective body *is* sensibility, the in-apparent, the unfolding of sense beyond the confines of the 'world'. Sense is traced in the body. "The significance of the trace consists in signifying without making appear"; the trace establishes a relation "personal and ethical, a relation, obligation, that does not unveil... [as] the trace does not belong to phenomenology, to comprehension of *appearance* and *dissimulation*, it could be approached by another path, by situating that significance from the phenomenology it interrupts" (41). The trace functions as a sign, but signifies outside intention, and the gaze operating according to what is already 'said' or sighted according to the intentional correlation. According to Levinas, beyond the interiority of a Self, the trace is the retreat of the Other and escapes presence as well as memory; it "obliges with regard to Infinity",

“the insertion of space in time, the point where the world leans toward a past and a time” (42).

The face is, in and of itself, visitation and transcendence. But the face, fully open, can at the same time be in itself, because it is in the trace of illeity. Illeity is the origin of the otherness of being, in which the *in itself* of objectivity participates by betraying it... It is by that illeity, situated beyond the calculations and reciprocities of the economy of the world, that being has a sense. Sense that is not a finality (44).

II. A Reading of Derrida’s *Memoirs of the Blind*

“... to feel my eyes is to feel that
they are threatened with being seen”

- Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*

Derrida’s *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993) speaks of blindness and invisibility, and situates the problematic within the theme of the point of view²⁶. Derrida’s treatment of the point of view in *Memoirs* takes us straight into the issues of corporeality and the aesthetic with which we are concerned in this thesis. The work reflects on the meaning and implications of the phenomena of vision, from the thematics of blindness to evidence. First published to accompany an exhibition of drawings of the same name at the Louvre Museum 1990-91, *Memoirs of the Blind* comments on drawings concerned with ‘blind men and visionaries’ and approaches these works outside the classical work of the art-historian.

²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Hereafter MB.

Derrida's work approaches the artworks in order to say something about positions – also in a meta-discursive sense – or about ways of 'opening eyes' by opening up the problematic of the *point* of view, the corporeality which informs every gaze and insight²⁷. The point of view cannot be abstracted from the corporeality that is inextricable from a viewpoint.

Derrida's work is concerned to 'draw out' a certain 'origin of drawing'. The claim of *Memoirs* is that all painting 'is drawing', that drawing is at the origin, the point at which vision is forgetful of itself, as it also moves outside vision. Derrida elaborates this claim by his specific approach to the 'point of view'. 'The point of view' is approached through the themes of "blindness, disappropriation, and the interruption of a lineage or filiation: the cancellation of what makes representation possible..." (MB ix). Ultimately the themes concern the affections of the body, what a body does, beyond our representational being in the world, 'on the other side of vision'. Derrida wants to say something about "a singular genealogy, a singular illustration, an illustration of oneself among all these illustrious blind men who keep each other in memory, who greet and recognise one another in the night" (ix)²⁸. The text and the approach to the drawings, as well as the question of what drawing does, say something about the legacy of representation and what is bypassed in this legacy. Our dependence upon objects and representation of objects is forgetful of the *life* of the body, the manner in which the latter informs the objectification we perform regarding our being in the world. Derrida's work and his reading of these artworks perform a certain bracketing of the tradition of representational knowledge, which has put its faith in the notion of evidential in-sight. The manner in which we establish ourselves as 'worldly beings' is forgetful of whatever does not *appear*

²⁷ The full version of *Memoirs* which I comment on here is expanded from the original 'catalogue' to accompany the exhibition, and includes seventy-one over the exhibition's display of forty-four drawings and paintings.

²⁸ As the Preface points out, the French *Memoirs* of the title can be read as both 'memoirs' and 'memories' of the blind. Derrida later in the text emphasises the double genitive 'of the blind'. The memoirs are of the blind, but also *of* the blind. This is of great importance as one of the arguments of the text is that all painting/drawing is blind. That is, it originates through a certain blindness, the point – which is not a point in space and time, but rather refers to the point of view according to the life of the subjective body – in which vision is suspended. Vision is suspended at its origin. I shall return to this point.

to us – according to the ‘transcendental illusion of the ego’ – in the ‘light’ of the world. Derrida’s translators ask us to recall that “the draftsman’s contract always concerns a pleasure and a condition that are not only out of sight, but *out of this world*” (MB x. My emphasis). As embodied beings we are given to the experience of ourselves by what is in infinite excess of this experience. Forces of sensible or material being inform the experience of self-awareness beyond our representation of ourselves as objects of the world. If what we have referred to in this thesis as the subjective body is considered in terms of its undergoing of life’s auto-affectations, the body must be considered in terms of this singular creation, belonging to a singular human being, before it can be posited as an object ‘external’ to myself or as an object of reflection. Derrida opens his text with an acknowledgement of the difference between seeing and believing. The Greek *skepsis* inscribes this difference; it has to do with the eyes, visual perception and the gaze which finds the object (1). Derrida makes the move from phenomenological perception to the event that gives rise to perception and perspective, the movement of a bodily exposure beyond its representation. Derrida’s theme of the point of view recognises this initial exposure to singular creation by finding that it is the ‘point’ that is blind, a certain blindness at the heart of sight is not only a condition of sight, but calls the traditional notion of perception into question²⁹.

Organised around the theme of the point of view, all the seventy-one drawings of the text concern blindness. They range from the biblical story of Christ healing the blind, the blind as visionaries, to Oedipal blindness. Derrida approaches these drawings of the blind according to the organising theme of the point of view, in order to argue that blindness is at the heart of ‘perception’ or what gives rise to perspective. The first of Derrida’s two hypotheses regarding the relation between blindness and what gives rise to perspective is the *abocular* hypothesis, that “the drawing is blind” (2)³⁰. The hand is always already out in front of sight, the “operation of drawing would have something to do with blindness,

²⁹ Recall here Derrida’s claim that he knew ‘no such thing as perception’. Recall also the consequence of Deleuze’s immanentism: the inseparability of perception from creation or *conception*, in both senses of the word.

³⁰ ‘*Abocular*’ from *ab oculis* or ‘without the eyes’.

would in some way regard blindness [aveuglement]" (2). The second hypothesis: "an eye graft, the grafting of one point of view onto the other: a drawing of the *blind* is a drawing of the blind... There is no tautology here, only a destiny of the self-portrait" (2). Derrida designates a 'drawing potency', the *trait*³¹ at the origin of drawing. Derrida asks what happens when one writes without seeing and answers: "A hand of the blind ventures forth alone or disconnected, in a poorly delimited space; it feels its way, it gropes, it caresses as much as it inscribes, *trusting in the memory of signs and supplementing sight*. It is as if the lidless eye had opened at the tip of the fingers" (3). The blind body draws, it 'draws out' by way of a *retreat* [*retrait*] a certain potency of the body which pierces through blindness, by a 'memory of the trait', a "sort of *re-drawing*, a *with-drawing*... and a supplementary *trait*" (3). Derrida refers to a blindness, or invisibility, which concern the point at which the painter or draftsman directs the gaze from model to canvas, the hand is out in front, one could say 'it precipitates'. According to Derrida, "the theme of the drawings of the blind is, before all else, the hand" (4). The logic of the trait is what makes this retreat from sight into a *potential* at the origin of drawing. Derrida states: "The trait must proceed in the night. It escapes the field of vision because it is not yet visible" (48). Derrida draws attention to how spoken language "speaks to itself, which is to say, *from/of blindness*. It always speaks to us from the blindness that constitutes it" (4). While the word is understood and heard, 'the sonorous phenomenon' remains "invisible as such" (4). The trait, like the word, takes up time, not space: the spread out invisibility is a 'drawn-out' moment of faith rather than sight in which some thing is drawn from faith in memory. Faith rather than sight is at the origin of drawing and it originates as a bodily movement, the 'point' in which blindness guides before sight. This mention of memory testifies to an indebtedness in face of what is other than sight, the 'law beyond sight', and this "debt must be repaid with words on parchment, with visible signs of the invisible" (29). Inscription or drawing testifies thus as monuments to an observance of a law beyond sight, "ordering truth alongside the debt, ordering truth from the debt... [testifies] at once to the overabundance and the failure [*défaillance*] of the visible" (29). What 'guides the graphic point' according to Derrida is the "*observance* of a commandment,

³¹ The French *trait* has a range of meanings, as is pointed out by the translator, from "a trait or feature to a line, stroke, or mark". (MB 2)

the acknowledgement before knowledge, the gratitude of receiving before seeing" (29). The logic of the trait suggests this: "at the origin of the *graphein* there is debt or gift rather than representational fidelity" (30). Drawing is a response, beyond the distinction between passivity and activity. Faith or memory, 'in the moment proper to it' is blind. Inscription or drawing, are matters of a "restoring of sight" rather than the object of visibility. Accordingly, "truth belongs to this movement of repayment that tries in vain to render itself adequate to its cause or to the thing... The just measure of 'restoring' or 'rendering' is impossible – or infinite" (30). Derrida speaks here of the conditions of visibility by showing how drawing commemorates invisibility, how there is a certain blindness at the origin of all the monuments of vision. Drawing or inscription: these graphic acts are indebted to a certain absence and inseparable from corporeality.

Between Derrida's two hypotheses about eyes and hands, which cannot really be separated, is an 'event'. Derrida locates the *event*, or the point of view, which is not a point as such, in "the fold" which makes up the relation between the two hypotheses "the one repeating the other without being reduced to it" (41). To understand Derrida's argument regarding these hypotheses of blindness and invisibility, it is necessary to understand the notion of the trait as it remains invisible, "not only because it is not yet visible, but because it does not belong to the realm of the spectacle, of spectacular objectivity" (45). The trait does not conform to the visible, the "heterogeneity" which separates trait and what is drawn remains "abyssal" (45). This abyssal heterogeneity of the visible to the invisible can be understood either as a "reserve of visibility" or as radically different with regard to the phenomenality of light and sight. "The visibility of the visible cannot, by definition, be seen" and the hypothesis is, on Derrida's view "that the draftsman always sees himself to be prey to that which is each time universal and singular and would thus have to be called the *unbeseen*, as one speaks of the unbeknownst. He recalls it, is called, fascinated, or recalled by it. Memory or not, and forgetting is memory, in memory or without memory" (45). Because the invisible can be located at the origin of visibility as a condition of possibility, there is always a possibility of "ruination" at the origin of drawing and the sacrifice of perception for memory. This suggests the visible as marked by a necessary 'impossibility'. There is an inaccessibility

at the heart of the 'visible' and this is why we can speak of a singular creation of the invisible and confer upon it a kind of transcendental operation. This inaccessibility is testament to the fact that perception is not the purity of coming into presence for a consciousness that sights it; we always perceive more than we perceive, to perceive is already to recollect, and to acknowledge an excess of the perceived. The origin of drawing is self-effacing. Derrida speaks of the different aspects of the trait, the first regarding the double genitive 'of the blind' which marks the act of tracing/drawing. The second aspect is what Derrida calls the "withdrawal [*retrait*]... the differential inappearance of the trait" (53); the trait, once it has been traced, disappears and so marks the limit of representation. The trait is 'the line itself', beyond figure/form it "signals toward" an inaccessibility, it is what continually divides itself in becoming other than itself (54). The third aspect of the logic of the trait/traced is its 'rhetoric'. Derrida suggests that the withdrawal or differential inappearance, "at the very moment when the trait is drawn, when it draws away" (56), is this not precisely the condition of possibility for speech? Language appears in the fold of the visible and the invisible, conditioned by blindness, the corporeal event or aspects that make up the point of view. Graphic restitution of the invisible, the blindness at the heart of vision, or drawing/writing, is testament to a singular genesis, "a phenomenon whose inappearance is of another kind" (52).

If the trait is radically other than phenomenality conceived by light/sight, it follows that "the visible as such would be invisible, not as visibility, the phenomenality or essence of the visible, but as the singular body of the visible itself, right on [*à même*] the visible" (51). What Derrida describes here is the in-visible of Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*. At this point, Derrida speaks of a "re-reading of the later Merleau-Ponty" (52). Although Derrida speaks of an "absolute invisibility" rather than Merleau-Ponty's "four layers" of the invisible, both Derrida and Merleau-Ponty recognise the 'phenomenon' whose inappearance is of another kind. Merleau-Ponty states in his working notes: "the invisible is there without being an object, it is pure transcendence without an ontic mask. And the 'visibles' themselves... are centered on a nucleus of absence" (WN 229, quoted MB 52). The importance of recognising this absence lies in

that it opens us to that which other. Our experience, according to Merleau-Ponty, is open to what is not originally present to us, to consciousness or vision; an absence is thus part of originating experience (VI 159). According to Derrida, this openness is immediately part of experience. Derrida relates the openness and the absence, as these inform the point of view, to what Merleau-Ponty describes as the *punctum caesum*. Derrida quotes two working notes of Merleau-Ponty, which I have already quoted in chapter two of this thesis, in order to show that Merleau-Ponty makes the point that the visible is *made visible* by an absence at the heart of sight³²:

When I say that every visible is an invisible, that perception is imperception, that consciousness has a “*punctum caesum*”, that to see is always to see more than one sees – this must not be understood in the sense of a contradiction – it must be imagined that I add to the visible... a non-visible... - One has to understand that it is the visibility itself that involves a non-visible... (WN 247, quoted in MB 52).

What consciousness does not see it does not see for reasons of principle, it is because it is consciousness that it does not see. *What* it does not see is what in it prepares the vision of the rest (as the retina is blind at the point where the fibres that will permit the vision spread out into it). To touch *oneself*, to see *oneself*... is not to apprehend oneself as an ob-ject, it is to be open to oneself... The feeling that one feels, the seeing that one sees, is not a thought of seeing or of feeling, but vision, feeling, mute experience of a mute meaning (WN 248, quoted in MB 53).

The point of view, like the *punctum caesum*, must be understood in terms of a corporeal condition. The blindness at the heart of sight is the trait of invisibility, an immediate absence. As Derrida points out, the *punctum* in its anatomico-physiological or ophthalmological definition must be considered an image or index regarding vision in general of that cannot be reflectively “thought” in the “specular or speculative mode” (MB 53). That is, while the *punctum* is blinded at the point it ‘sees itself seeing’ and so

³² See chapter two, pp. 17-19.

eludes the notion of being-object for thought, it nevertheless is a condition for reflection and speculative thought. Both Derrida and Merleau-Ponty point to the invisible as the originary *aperspective* (53), which conditions the visible, and by consequence thought. For Derrida, this means that painting, which commemorates visibility must be reinscribed as drawing, to commemorate the movement of invisibility which tends to cancel itself out in the rhetoric of visibility. Derrida's argument that the invisible lies "right on" the visible – as a tear or *punctum* – does imply that an openness to the invisible is a condition of our corporeity. Even if the invisible is understood as an "absolute invisible", as an absence, it is inseparable from a certain life of the subjective body. Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the invisible, however, obscures any notion of a subjective body, as consciousness's "tie to Being, its corporeity..." (WN 248), becomes a manner of fusing an enlarged corporeity with a sort of spiritual sensible intelligible.

Derrida's rhetoric, as he speaks of commemoration of the invisible and argues that drawing is drawing *of* the blind with a double genitive, takes us to a specific view of the self-portrait. Self-portraiture shows the limits of representation and the inadequacies of vision. Because the source point of drawing is blind, as drawing draws from or traces the invisible, the self-portrait shows the impossibility of adequate self-representation. The mirror image of oneself is never 'the full picture'. The inadequacy of mirrored representation is due to the corporeal situation that, firstly, a mirror image is always in reverse and, secondly, in order to see oneself seeing the eyes must focus and the focal point obscures the full image. Derrida describes the meeting of the eyes in the focal point as a situation in which "invisibility is shared out between the eyes" (57). One never arrives at the complete image of one's own face, but sees oneself as other. Self-awareness is always marked by otherness, and self-portraiture undertaken via the mirror-image, can only portray the self as other than itself. This is so, not because the self-portrait is another object, but because our grasp of ourselves as objects remains elusive. An absence is at the source of presence. The self-portrait is testament to an invisible, without this invisible ever appearing, but must rather be understood as the self-portrait's de-monstration³³. The

invisible is traced at the limits of any representation, as 'specter' rather than spectacle. Manifestation goes beyond phenomenal appearance on the classical model. Derrida's discussion comes back to the critique of the phenomenological notions of presence and presence to self. The de-monstration involved in self-portraiture raises the question of the unrepresentable, and the relationship between the unrepresentable and representation. I take up this point in the next chapter's discussion of Henri Michaux's art.

(a) The Specter of the Other in Re-presentation

When Merleau-Ponty states that "to feel one's eyes is to feel that they are threatened with being seen" (VI) he makes the point that bodily being is exposure, first of all. Interiority and self-awareness are always determined by a sense of divergence. In Levinas and Derrida this means that the otherness of an absolute separation is the mark of corporeality. Merleau-Ponty's ontology speaks of a chiasmic divergency that Levinas's ethics of affectivity and signification by otherness would refute. Levinas states in *Otherwise than Being* that corporeality is a situation, which places one in a position of vulnerability. For Levinas, there can be no con-fusion of the other's corporeality and my own, and he speaks of a divergency which is absolute. For Levinas, contact with another person's corporeality, as literally when touching another's skin, does not call for a recognition of implication with another's corporeality, but addresses me. For Levinas, this address is the consequence of the other's corporeality being revealed to me as *face*. This corporeal situation reveals the other and, as a consequence, myself in our singular corporeal exposure and passivity. Levinas speaks of the emergence of ethical subjectivity as "a recurrence to oneself out of an irrecusable exigency of the other, a duty... becoming a debt and an extreme passivity" (OB 109). Self-awareness comes as a consequence of a

³³ See Merleau-Ponty's essay, "Cezanne's Doubt" in *Sense and Non-sense*, trans. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 9-26. Cezanne's doubt is precisely the logic of the self-portrait, the de-monstration at the heart of presentation.

“cellular irritability” (143), a consequence of corporeal exposure, “prior to all reflection, prior to every positing” (111). Levinas’s account of the signification of the other and the openness of the corporeal situation resists the ‘migration’ involved in Merleau-Ponty’s notions of encroachment with regard to the signification evinced by the other’s flesh. Levinas notions of approaching otherness and sensibility refer to a situation in which there is no ‘dimensionality’ with regard to the notion of being tied to others before any articulation of self-identity. The notion’s meaning with regard to corporeality is ethical, not ontological. Against the dimensionality implied in the notion of flesh, Levinas speaks of susceptibility: “the self is susceptibility itself” (195 n 12), the submission to “irreversible diachrony” (90). The tracing of such diachrony is the signification involved when we speak of the otherness of self-awareness, and cannot be reduced to an object for consciousness. The manifestation of the face is the manifestation of what is absent to consciousness, the invisible content of form. Ethical recognition of otherness is not reducible to the embodied forms of representation. What is traced in the face of the other is a significance, which is irrecuperable in the presence of an object for consciousness. It exceeds this presence and presence to oneself. Otherness in-forms re-presentation like a specter; its contents are irrecuperable and immemorial. In this otherness lies the real significance of our corporeal situation; the ethical demand lies beyond manifestation of the visible. In this manner, affectivity points to a relation between ethics and aesthetics, to what is drawn up and withdrawn by the body, the invisible “right on the visible”.

Chapter Five

Body Matters: Embodiment and Creative Time in the Art of Henri Michaux

There are thinkings of the systematicity of the body, there are value codings of the body. The body as such cannot be thought.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Henri Michaux's works span both visual and verbal art. He engages with both art forms over several decades, producing a prodigious body of work. That his is such a proliferating body of work has to do with the manner in which especially the visual works – paintings and drawings – tend to be created in momentary fashion, it is a sort of speed art recording movement. The notion of a 'body of work' has particular resonance with regard to Michaux. His is very much an art of the body, a proliferation of the matter, or dynamics, of the body itself. Whether this 'proliferation' is understood in terms of his experiments with the hallucinogen mescaline – the effects of which he comments on for more than a decade – or the various expressions of body matter effected on canvas according to affections of subjectivity, the body or embodiment is central to Michaux's creation. Embodiment matters here to the extent that the body's expression in subjective life, as much as in creation and re-presentation in the works of art, makes up the subject matter of his corpus. The situation of embodiment is inseparable from the creation or genesis of the artwork, not as a tool or vehicle for the artist, as extended to brush and pen, but as the immediacy of an *energetic materiality* that effaces itself in the line on the canvas or the written word on the page. That is, a genesis or creation pertaining to the dynamics of embodiment is requisite and anterior to the artistic creation. Michaux's art is testament to the energetic materiality, which marks the *life* of the subjective body; the body of work cannot be understood separately from this life.

I. Orientation Towards the Other/ the Time of the Body.

(a) Time and Sensibility/Sense

I want to start this investigation of Michaux's work by showing that the requisite of what we have termed the dynamics of the subjective body relates to what Levinas in *Time and the Other*¹ designates as the absolute anteriority of a body-subject which is attuned to what he terms the wholly Other, or the other in the Other. Subjectivity emerges as an awareness of exteriority, the bodily 'memory' of a separation or difference that allows one to 'hear the call' of an Other. Separation gives rise to subjectivity in the awareness of otherness. Subjectivity is according to the otherness of self-awareness, which always already marks the life of the subjective body. The awareness of otherness is prior to self and interiority; it is im-mediate with respect to the structures of consciousness. Levinas's thought on otherness and subjectivity opens up a space of difference, a space of 'difficult freedom', which demands a response to the Other². It is a space of a 'creative emergence', 'revelation' and 'communication' that are not based in knowledge. That we live from the body means, before any ontological supposition, that "we *are* in relation with something that is absolutely other (TO 74, my emphasis). Since orientation towards the other cannot be thought outside the corporeal situation of (being) the (singular) body, time must be thought according to the singular body; for Levinas, this is the situation of

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987). Hereafter referred to as TO.

² Levinas's analyses of the emergence of subjectivity in *Time and the Other* emphasise the event of this emergence as the awareness or introduction of difference into the anonymous indifference that he designates as the material plurality of the *il y a*, or the 'there is'. The introduction of difference is the awareness of exteriority by the subjective body before any notion of self and thus proper self-reflection. The awareness of otherness, *felt* according to the subjective body gives rise to the reflection upon this corporeal situation and is thus the creation of interiority. This is what Levinas means by subjectivity coming into being in its hearing the call of the other. That is, the ability to respond is conditioned by the subjective body.

the singular one-for-the-singular-other. For Levinas, the meta-physical situation of response/ibility to an Other is 'extracted' from a bodily situation or *physis*, the positioning or meaning of 'the life' of the subjective body³.

According to Levinas in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, the 'arrival' or 'gift' of the absolute Other, as 'hearing his call', is a transcendence disruptive of discourse⁴. As Derrida recognises in his second essay on Levinas⁵, this moment of interruption cannot be understood as the purity of the phenomenological present. In fact, Levinas's 'moment' orients us to the *impurity* of the 'present' in so far as the interruption designates only the *trace* of what is already past. That is, what Levinas describes as the moment or 'arrival' of the Other is the "entre-temps", the between of an absolute anteriority, which cannot be recalled or presented by consciousness as presence-to, and its referral to the future. This 'entre-temps', or immemorial 'time of the Other', is precisely an admission of the extent to which the present is never available or presentable as such, to discourse or to theory. Levinas's 'moment', the im-mediacy of exposure to otherness, points us to a forgetfulness of philosophical teleology, which is a forgetfulness of 'sense' bound up with the life of the body, in favour of designated 'meanings'. The temporality related in the otherness which always already marks the coming to awareness of subjectivity, must be thought otherwise than self-presence⁶. The importance of pointing to this forgetfulness is the resuscitation of this neglected moment or entre-temps according to the *time* of the body or *sense/ibility*. The Other is in excess of any containment by consciousness; this

³ On this viewpoint, and this is what I want to underline by bringing together the different philosophies of Henry, Deleuze and Levinas, it becomes less relevant whether metaphilosophically speaking Levinasian 'ethics' is understood as first philosophy. What is relevant is that thematics and methodology come together in the specific sense of 'positioning' that I take to be an argument regarding time and the singularity of embodiment in these different positions or philosophical arguments.

⁴ The previous chapter discussed this in terms of Levinas's designation of an interruption of 'Saying' in the supposed immanence of the general thematisations of 'the said'. I showed there that the concordant conception of language as what occurs in the encounter with the other according to the subjective body entails a move from 'meaning' to 'sense'.

⁵ See Jacques Derrida, "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am", trans. Ruben Berezdivin, in *Re-Reading Levinas*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁶ See Jacques Derrida, "At This Very Moment", p. 36 especially.

excess demands a *felt* response, which corresponds to an awareness of exposure pertaining to the specific temporal reality of embodiment. What I have called the otherness of self-awareness is precisely the designation and effect of this excess of otherness, which is first of all affectivity pertaining to the subjective body.

This premise of 'experience' and its language exceed the central tenets of classical phenomenology, as recognised by Henry as well as Derrida's later reading of Levinas. Because the Other and this awareness of otherness re-present excess with respect to the formation of consciousness, the relation with otherness constitutive of subjectivity must be understood according to a conception of desire which differs from the classical conception based in lack. Desire is conceived here as a positivity that recalls Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty: a consequence of a sensibility or orientation – affectivity – that is 'productive of what Deleuze, in considering Merleau-Ponty's later work, terms an infinite infinite'⁷. Time is the infinite impending arrival of the Other, because the separation which creates the tension, the awareness of otherness, is not overcome or neutralised. The premise for this situation with regard to temporality and otherness is the affectivity bound up with the subjective body. As bound up with the subjective body, the awareness of otherness goes beyond the 'finite' alterity that is neutralised in the identification of the I. The subjective body is a condition for the awareness of otherness that marks the self, and a condition for a reception of exteriority that actually preserves the sense of otherness in the relation. Embodiment *is* awareness of *difference*, as affectivity is inseparable from the life of the subjective body, irreducible to consciousness. Exteriority, inseparable from the condition of embodiment, orders an awareness which, as a consequence of the otherness that marks it, is creative or productive of the new in its singular response to what is equally singular. The insistence on singularity on this point is consequent on the conditioning by the body and not reducible to the abstraction of a general concept of otherness or the 'intuition' of a general 'other'. This impingement of exteriority or the Other is not reducible to our understanding or conception of it, it re-presents an infinite in the finite which is anterior to conscious understanding or 'the intelligible', or the intuition

⁷ See chapter three of this thesis, p. 148.

of classical phenomenology. It is productive of the self which orders intellection and intuition. Thought and *conception* – in both senses of the word – emerge from a sensibility that originates with the life or situation of the subjective body. This is a conception of the originary that is not reducible to phenomenological beginning or the phenomenological discourse set in motion by it⁸. In *Time and the Other*, Levinas describes the ‘hypostasis’ or event of the emergence of subjectivity as “a rip in the infinite beginningless and endless fabric of existing. The present [because marked by the trace of the Other and so ‘impure’] rips apart and joins together again” (52)⁹.

The important consequence of this argument regarding the infinite and desire, is that the relation with what is absolutely other is a communication ‘in eros’, of the body, which is ‘not a knowledge’, but which disturbs the autonomy of supposed presence-to-self (88). The condition of subjectivity delineated in Levinas is premised on the openness of a body singularly exposed to the proximity of the other. Meaning, or sense rather, is created from this situation, which translates in Levinas as a desire for the other, an “absolutely original relationship of eros” (88). Sense is (produced as) orientation towards an Other (92). That there is no teleology involved in this desire, no ‘arrival at meaning’, is precisely because the other cannot be contained as such. Levinas states: “the relationship with the Other is the *absence of the other*” (90, my emphasis). This description of time recognises that temporality is bound up with an absence, and this marks ‘sense’. This absence to consciousness is neither recognised nor thematised in phenomenological meaning. Ab-

⁸ When Levinas describes the event of difference as the emergence of subjectivity from the plurality of the *il y a*, the important point made is that it is the awareness of difference from self that is the condition of self-reflection; the genealogy of a difference in Levinas is the emergence of sense according to a “pluralism that does not merge into unity” (TO 42).

⁹ Diachrony, or the ‘time of the Other’ is irruption in inner time consciousness. What is important to note is that the irruption is a qualification on the part of the subjective body which thus expands upon the concept of ‘human time’. The notion of the life of the subjective body, as a specific and singular position or temporality inseparable from affectivity, works according to the Bergsonian insight that reality is not reducible to ‘one realm of explanation’. See John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). Beyond the distinction, however, between conscious human experience and ‘vitalism’ as a name for a process of physical reality, the relation between time and affectivity yields a notion of the life of the body, which brings together the insights of Levinas, Deleuze and Michel Henry. Foremost in this expansion with regard to Bergsonian distinctions – the manner in which for Bergson ‘discontinuity’ happens ‘on the level of biological evolution rather than conscious human experience’ (6) – is Levinas’s notion of an awaiting of the Other and a specific conception of desire.

sense, or what is 'of sense' according to Levinas's argument, marks an awaiting or condition of the subjective body, which entirely escapes the genesis of meaning according to act-intentionality and object-manifestation on the classical account.

(b) (Ab-) sense in the Visual Works of Michaux

The sense of the phrase 'the otherness of self-awareness' is nowhere more succinctly expressed than in the works of Henri Michaux. The phrase works well as a general description of an event that characterises the entirety of his artistic creation: the circuit of affectivity, dynamism and emotion. Michaux's works are expressive of embodiment, the immediacy that marks the life of the subjective body. His art works are responses to the expressive body as much as they are expressions of the life of the body. To a large extent devoid of teleology, or designated 'meaning', his visual works express movements rather than still-life, a dynamism of lines that escape the attempt by vision to fix its object. Generally, his visual artworks may be described as disturbing vision. The visual works are best approached through an understanding of temporality concurrent with embodiment. His art demonstrates a relation to what cannot be contained or even enter the present/presence couplet of classical phenomenological logic; the life of the subjective body always already breaks through delimitation or representation by presence. The visual works, particularly, inscribe this excess, a polyvalence that eludes the expression of verbal art. It is precisely the awareness of this excess – heightened and exemplified in his experiments with hallucinogens – that makes him explore a dynamic life of the affective body more readily expressible or 'drawn out' in painting than poetic writing.

Michaux's art expresses the extent to which subjectivity may be designated according to the development of the body as energetic materiality and the revelations – in other words, affectivity – that concur with this situation. His experiments with hallucinogens are only

one expression of the extent to which awareness of this situation of the subjective body is abrasive to 'the world', if by that designation we mean what is 'recognisable to us' in simple correlation to the consciousness of classical phenomenology. This turn away from the world of designated meanings suggests that phenomenology's powers of description are always inadequate in consequence of its forgotten premise, the life of the subjective body. In *La Nuit Rémue*¹⁰, Michaux speaks of "the hollow in me" as the time of the subjective body or the absent contents of time, the otherness of self-awareness. The 'hollow in me' is inseparable from an intimation of exteriority. Levinas's claim is that "a plurality insinuates itself into the very existence of the existent" (TO 75). This plurality is an origin, which is not identified with conscious correlations of meaning. This claim is entirely in agreement with Michaux's notions of subjectivity, exteriority and the (creative) time of the body. Levinas recognises a genesis regarding the relation of time and subjectivity as concurrent with the impending arrival of an Other, always already felt according to the orientation in our corporeal situation, beyond the 'Being of the world'. Something not containable according to the directives of a self e/affects the orders of creation. Genesis of meaning is not reducible to the manifestation of a visible world or the acts of consciousness. Accordingly, a certain ab-sense marks the visual art of Michaux. Ab-sense as such designates a genesis of meaning, or sense, that is exterior to the dictates of conscious correlation on the phenomenological model.

In summation of the Levinasian argument 'drawn out' in Michaux's work, the subjective body retains a memory of a difference, which precedes the emergence of subjectivity in the awareness of its condition, the corporeal difference that speaks of absolute otherness. What Michaux describes as 'the hollow in me' is the awareness that difference, separation, or the absent contents of consciousness, are the non-synthesisable conditions of experience. The proximity of the Other, inscribed in the situation of corporeality, is the irreducible premise that allows us to attribute *experience* to a subjectivity. The phenomenological imperative of a 'return to experience' must take into account the absolute anterior position of the affective body, the openness of a body singularly exposed to the proximity of otherness. Simon Critchley states that the entire

¹⁰ Henri Michaux, *La Nuit Rémue* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967).

phenomenological thrust of Levinas's *Otherwise than Being* is to 'found' intentionality on sensibility and to 'describe' – I would say determine – sensibility as a proximity to the other¹¹. I agree with the emphasis. The consequence of this emphasis is a further consideration of subjectivity as orientational in a corporeal sense. The awareness of otherness, which marks the life of the subjective body, is traceable to a corporeal situation – an orientation – that allows for reception of the other person, and the preserving of what is singularly other about him, and about the self. The latter point particularly informs Michaux's work.

Levinas's as well as Michaux's work demonstrate a relation of time and body which prompts the insight that creation is not necessarily reducible to a teleological principle. Creation in Michaux is an effect of the dynamics of the subjective body, and so involves a resuscitation of an energetic materiality or singular genesis *by* the body. Creation on this model involves the awaiting of otherness, rather than the telos which marks the creative imagination or intentional consciousness in the accounts of classical phenomenology and most critical commentaries on art and creation. Genesis or creation must be understood, according to Levinas as well as Michaux, as originating with the desire born by the corporeal situation, its orientation towards what is other than self, and as anterior to intentions or what is presentable through conscious acts. Going beyond parameters that would be recognisable to classical phenomenology, Michaux's art attempts to trace the ab-sense born(e) by a temporality that does not belong to the self, and which testifies, in Michaux and Levinas, to the otherness that haunts, as well as constitutes, desire for the other. Genesis is in this sense immanent to otherness. Genesis on this account does not go through formative propositions, which identify the world for intentional consciousness. Immanent genesis originates as movement without beginning, because it originates as difference or difference from self. This is the dynamics of the corpo-real. The analyses of this corpo-reality constitute the subject of the main body of

¹¹ Simon Critchley, "Introduction" in Critchley and Bernasconi eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 21.

Michaux's work. The visual works particularly demonstrate a genesis of sense from sensibility/corporeal orientation.

II. Absence and Expression: *Emergences-Resurgences*

Emergences-Resurgences was first published as part of the series "Les Sentiers de la création"¹² and demonstrates a tracing of the self according to the anterior emergence onto the canvas of the affectivity that marks the life of the subjective body. The 'emergences' are re-traced through the 'resurgences' in the verbal expression that follows them. Like all Michaux's work, *Emergences-Resurgences* is of a provisional and occasional nature¹³. This characteristic of the works – the visual as well as the verbal – must be understood according to Michaux's attempt to give expression to a profound movement or expressivity characteristic of the material with which he works – the body – and according to the materiality or energy conveyed. That is, not only the materiality of the resulting visual or verbal expression, but the energetic materiality that marks the body-subject as an anterior condition and informs the creative impulse. Michaux's work, especially the visual work, traces the bodily premises of creation. The 'drawing out' of a certain life of the subjective body traces the emergence of self/subjectivity. The *trait* is a key word with regard to Michaux's art, derived from the Latin *trahere*, meaning to draw or to draw out¹⁴. *Emergences-Resurgences* traces the development of Michaux's ventures into drawing, from the earliest attempts in the 1920s until his mature expression in the

¹²Henri Michaux, *Emergences-Resurgences*, trans. Richard Sieburth (New York: The Drawing Center, 2000). Hereafter referred to as ER.

¹³ See ER, Translator's Note, p. 7.

¹⁴ See ER, Translator's Note, p. 7 as well as chapter four of this thesis, where I point out the same etymological origin with regard to Derrida's treatment of the *trait* in his *Memoirs of the Blind*. Richard Sieburth's translation of ER operates with 'line' according to Michaux's use of the term, but it is of equal importance to include the fuller semantic range of the word, which in French includes marks, traces, distinctive features and moves. Ref. Translator's Note, p. 7.

1950s and 60s. Michaux opens *Emergences* by noting that painting allows him to 'decondition' himself (ER 10). What is interesting is the impulse that makes this deconditioning imperative for Michaux. The deconditioning of his self is expressive of the search for the traces of self in an anterior condition truer to the life of the body. Michaux's drawing taps into the energetic materiality which marks the emergence of subjectivity, the awareness of the life of the subjective body anterior to the self given by its being 'in the world'. The work taps into the *élan* of a condition, pre-subject, pre-reflection, in order to express a life that is entirely different from the world of manifested objects. The 'objects' of Michaux's visual works are traces of a life of the body as exposure, and express a manifestation or 'phenomenality' different from one of intentional activity or intellection by consciousness. The expression on the canvas does not belong or conform to the visible world as determined by intentional activity or conscious intellection. Rather, what one sees in Michaux's work "is an entanglement, a drawing as it were desiring to withdraw into itself" (10). What is threatening to withdraw into itself is what Derrida and Merleau-Ponty mark as the in-visible, and what Michel Henry speaks of as 'Life' rather than 'world'. Drawing performs according to the traces of a different language, as a communication born according to an energetic materiality, which is first of all the life of the subjective body. In short, Michaux's 'visual works' open up to the life of the body, to the expression of the emergence of subjectivity as much as the emergence of 'the work' by tracing the line of an 'in-material' condition. That is, his work traces sense from an originary sensibility. Derrida's *Memoirs* argues that inscription or drawing attempt to 'restore sight' rather than the object of visibility. Drawing commemorates invisibility. Drawing or inscription is indebted to a certain absence and inseparable from corporeality¹⁵.

Michaux's work traces the line of a certain ab-sense; he speaks of the line as "loath to arrive, line of blind investigation. Leading nowhere [...], without the perception of any object, landscape, figure" (10). His work with the line – *le trait* – traces sense rather than intention, or its own 'arrival' in meaning. Michaux's work on the canvas does not trace a

¹⁵ See chapter four, section 2.

telos, but is rather marked by an infinite awaiting, in the sense discussed in the previous paragraphs with regard to Levinas. That is, there is no telos of the work conducive to intentional consciousness, but rather an awaiting, of an expression that originates in sensibility. “Encircling nothing, never encircled” (10). The trace must proceed in the night (MB 48); it is not born of a desire based in lack, but according to an excess of sensibility, and does not express ‘a work’ as grasped by either correlation or mimesis, the main progenitors of consciousness on the classical model¹⁶. “Line not yet having made its choice, not yet ready to have the point explained” (10).

Later, the traces become, or function as, sign. Michaux’s work concerns itself with the relation between trace and sign, and the sign’s ability to express “life” as “a murmur without end – which continues us, above and beyond quality. This is what needs to be bodied forth” (10). The development of Michaux’s work leads him to explorations of signs. His work takes up the concept of ‘writing’ according to Chinese calligraphy, and traces the development of the increasingly abstract nature of the ideogram from the almost mimetic, and he discovers the rhythms of an expression true to a drawing threatening to withdraw through *le trait*¹⁷. “I want my tracings to be the very phrasing of life – yet supple deformable, sinuous” (10). For Michaux, tracing on canvas becomes a matter of sign and line; his “pleasure lies in making things appear and then disappear” (13), he wants to trace what is “most withdrawn, most mine – and not with geometrical forms” (12), not “‘reproduce’ anything already out there in the world” (12). For Michaux such tracing must leave behind words, and engage with signs, lines. This is his version of the phenomenological reduction; his expression of sense traces the energetic materiality of the subjective body, which in its awareness of otherness is more primordial than the self.

¹⁶ I refer the ‘classical model’ to classical phenomenology as well as most historico-critical approaches to art.

¹⁷ See Henri Michaux, *Ideograms in China*, trans. Gustaf Sobin (New York: New Directions Books, 1984). Recall Derrida’s argument that “the just measure of ‘restoring’ or ‘rendering is... infinite” (MB 30). The trait takes up time rather than space.

Michaux's approach to the question of otherness and origins is similar to Levinas's in that he recognises the passivity involved in the reception of otherness. This passivity is understood according to the openness of the body or the corporeal situation¹⁸. Subjectivity, which is first of all marked as subjective body, is never enclosed in its own skin. The life of the subjective body is exposure, vulnerability, and openness to the approach of the other. The *trace*, as the manner of signification by the other, is the mark of its own effacement or incompleteness and according to Derrida, constitutive of presence¹⁹. In Michaux, otherness is traced through faces or heads 'appearing' through a responsive life of the body. The traces function as signs denoting transcendence according to immanent genesis: that is, the immanence of an immemorial past and a mark of otherness irreducible to the opposition absence/presence.

In all unfinished things I discover heads. Heads, the gathering points of moments, of probings, of anxieties, of desires, of whatever drives things forward, where everything combines and appreciates... including drawing. Once it has come to rest, everything fluid becomes a head. I recognise all imprecise forms as heads (14).

For Michaux as well as Levinas, otherness is always traceable to the Other. According to both, the Other comes out of the 'dark' so to speak, but does not enter into phenomenality on the classical account. The Other is not given as a generality shed light on by general conceptions that belong to the 'Being of the world'. Rather, the emergence of the singular Other is "independent of visible causes" (14). Both express in their works a reluctance to accept any primacy on the part of the traditional alliance between the visible 'world' and designated meaning, or the static concepts and orientation of evidential 'knowledge'. The origin or emergence of the Other is traced, rather, to the "night" of a corporeal situation or orientation that allows the emergence and reception of otherness "alive, individual,

¹⁸ Derrida shows in MB that drawing is a response, beyond the distinction between passivity and activity, and this is precisely the argument of Levinas, as well as what is expressed in Michaux's reflections on his art and the dynamics of creation. The time of the body is creative beyond intention and manifestation.

¹⁹ See Derrida's essays "Différance" and "At This Very Moment at This Work Here I Am".

fluctuating, graphic" (14). Michaux speaks of "throwing himself into" some watercolors in order that they "respond" (22). Sense/ibility is inseparable from response, the oscillation of sign and trace. Michaux recognises the irreducible 'affect' of the subjective body. Orientation or creation do not originate with thought, but according to the energetic materiality or *élan* we have designated as the corpo-real²⁰. Michaux speaks of this "throwing himself into" the works as "minutes of genuine blindness. Spontaneous. Superspontaneous" (29). Paradoxically, spontaneity marks for Michaux the non-intentional, what is and remains absent to reflection, conditioned by a temporality irreducible to the intentional self. The blindness is a consequence of corporeal life, which in being drawn or traced remains foreign to the correlation of intentionality and visibility. The 'work' of corporeal orientation does not return to the self, but is a departure without return or recognition/re-appropriation in reciprocity. It is the mark of a certain 'generosity' of the creative impulse. When Michaux argues that "dissolution [is] a necessary pre-requisite" (29) for drawing, he points out that in corporeal orientation sense is 'drawn out' through a different communication than that of visibility and designated meaning. Sense is drawn out by a 'profitless investment', a 'passage to the time of the

²⁰ The Bergsonian *élan*, as it designates the dynamism of *life*, refers to the fact that there are, according to Bergson, different types of reality, static and mobile. See John Mullarkey, ed., *The New Bergson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) p. 9. Bergson's vitalism transcends classical materialism with the concept of duration. Deleuze of course expands upon Bergsonian insights in his development of the notion of an energetic materiality. The notion of movement central to Bergson's metaphysics is the premise according to which Bergson understands "abstraction itself as a physical process in its actual operation and not just its origins" (6). Mullarkey points out that in Bergson "the *individuality* of movement is its metaphysical status. What makes a movement individual is the rich *particularity of the situation in, or rather with which it unfolds*. When represented, however, this movement has each of its various dynamic properties 'extracted' as a concept... Abstraction for Bergson is always extraction" (6, my emphases added to Mullarkey's). Bergson recognises that 'the concept generalizes at the same time that it abstracts' (6), and so reduces the thing represented to an image for thought, that is, the concept is 'image of an image' (8). Mullarkey points out that Bergson, while he does not explain the 'of' in terms of reference, asserts the "existence of an imagery from the outset that is subsequently more and more decontextualised" (8). Importantly, what Bergson points out here is that this inattention characterizing the process of abstraction or concept formation is "simultaneously the process of inattention to specificity" and this process is "ultimately described as a process of immobilization [and] that is why it concerns the physical, because it concerns time" (8). Where Bergson speaks of 'inattentiveness' (6), this is another designation of the forgetfulness outlined in this work. The orientation with regard to thought, abstraction and concept formation argued in this work must be understood as coming out of the Bergsonian orientation, which speaks of the physical event of a reality "between idealism and materialism" (7) which gives rise to thought. All Mullarkey's references here are to Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946)

other'²¹. According to Derrida's argument regarding drawing in *Memoirs*, sense is 'graphic' rather than figural or representational. Michaux's work is not deliberated; he speaks of faces turning up – "there are faces in the air" (29) – and acknowledges that the receptivity involved is beyond the distinction between passive and active insofar as the response is creative. Faces emerge from the paper, having "expressed themselves well in advance of me, rendering an impression which I do not recognize and which I will never *know* if it has previously passed through me" (32, my emphasis). However, as the response is creative, conditioned by the particular temporality pertaining to the body, the work allows the emergence of what is not grasped or possessed by the self in 'knowledge' or what is already 'said'. The work is not the product of intentional activity, and so "these are the truest faces" (32). Their reception is the product or *conception* of sensibility. This is the *significance* of the appearance of 'the face', as what eludes a possessive cognition²². Michaux speaks of "signs returning, not the same signs, *not the ones I had in mind* and not signs having to do with language – all emerging from the human shape", "human by the inner dynamism" (34, my emphasis). Levinas speaks of the approach of the Other according to a 'manifestation' that exceeds the idea of 'the other in me'. In "The Trace of the Other", the approach exceeds manifestation by the context of my horizons. That is, it signifies in and out of context: While the Other manifests itself according to a culturally determined phenomenality, "the other is given in the concept of the totality to which he is immanent" (TRO 351). On the other hand, the approach of the Other involves a "signifyingness of its own, independently of this signification received from the world" (351). That is, the other also affects without mediation, "his presence consists in... making an entry. This can also be stated in this way: the phenomenon which is the apparition of the other is also a face" (351). The other exceeds the image that would enclose it in so far as it also approaches as face, according to the response of a mobile orientation of the body. Michaux's art works according to the approach of the in-apparent, that is, a function of the sign which traces a surplus of the

²¹ The references to 'profitless investment', the generosity of the 'work' according to corporeal orientation and 'departure without return' are obviously informed by Levinas. See in particular, "The Trace of the Other", trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). Hereafter referred to as TRO.

²² See Levinas, "the face is a living presence; it is expression" (TI 66).

epistemologically willed 'image' or metaphorical/rhetorical figure. The emergence of these faces is for Michaux inseparable from the 'life' designating his/a corporeal orientation, which is also the emergence of his own subjectivity. In this sense also, they are "bodied forth": "Man happens to me, comes back to me, unforgettable man" (34). The event is immediate: "immediacy, immediacies... the newly arrived... in *status nascendi*... freeing up I know not what in me [...] an unexpected "becoming": gouaches" (50). The manifestation of the other is a "surplus over the inevitable paralysis of manifestation" (352), as *approach* it signifies as Life, its dynamic concrete being. This dynamic being de-structures the present as what is present to self. Face, as the expressivity of expression, refers phenomenality to a language not based in manifestation on the classical account, and resists the dissimulation of otherness in a theme or image. As approach rather than disclosure, the face signifies according to itself and not according to my intention. The other signifies, according to Levinas, "without qualities or attributes" (TI 74), in withdrawal, passage, and so is ontologically 'inevident'.

Michaux's drawings express energy, as of materiality, and the potentiality of what paradoxically 'appears' as the withdrawal of the trait²³. The 'withdrawal' must be understood according to the response of a bodily communication prior to the exchange of signs on a linguistic model; it refers to what is other or singular in the Other and the affect which results from exposure of the subjective body. Michaux speaks of an obligation to respond (40) to an appearance that assaults his sensibility. 'Beginnings', understood as 'creative *intention*', are 'secondary' effects of the 'moment' of energy engaged by the approach of what is other with respect to the self: "nucleus of energy (which is why its object or origin are irrelevant)" (41). What matters is the "tonus, the energy"; "it is toward this that one directs oneself, consciously or unconsciously, toward a state with a maximum *élan*, which is a maximum of density, of being, of actualization – whose remainders are merely combustibles, or occasions" (44). Michaux's art is oriented toward an *approach* of otherness, which "thus provides the most energetic inner means" (44). It is registered according to a creative impetus. According to the nature of the

²³ See illustrations pp. 36-37 in ER. See also Jacques Derrida, "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am", where he acknowledges the structure of the trace as inscribed in being effaced (37).

response, the creative impetus is “to know nothing”(44). The relation of the creation and the orientation must be understood in a corporeal sense, a communication according to sensibility on the Levinasian model. Michaux claims in *Emergences* that he paints/draws “in order to manipulate the world (its forms), to touch it more closely, more directly” (44). His drawing presents a corrective to the truth of the forms of the visible, or ‘the world’, for an affective reality which in-forms visibility, or knowledge. Michaux’s art is concerned with a production of the new, in the sense argued by Deleuze. The question posed in *Emergences* is “where to find the terrain for expansion, the terrain to carry out a life, another life in the making... a life not there before” (52). This would be a life not thematised or reduced according to the parameters of ‘the world’ of visibility which corresponds to the phenomenological ego-consciousness forgetful of the body.

(b) Expression/Expressivity: Resonances of the Body

When Deleuze reads Spinoza according to the term ‘expression’, a term not central to Spinoza’s *Ethics*, he does so in order to trace the ‘Saying’ of this text. That is, what Spinoza thematises in his work attests to a force at work, but not contained by its thematisation, or the ‘said’ of the text. In fact, Deleuze manages to elevate this notion of expression to the central notion of Spinoza’s work. My argument with regard to the issue at hand, the corpo-real orientation of a thought that originates in bodily affectivity and exposure, is that the notion of expression as developed by Deleuze, can also be used to illustrate the orientation that informs the work of Levinas as well as Michaux.

Levinas distinguishes between the thematisable, or ‘essence’, what discourse makes correspond to an already given meaning – “an identification of this and that in the already said” – (OB 37) and a certain ‘work’ pertaining to subjective existence which is always already exposure to what cannot be contained by ‘established meaning’. By this distinction, Levinas delineates a necessary move from ‘meaning’ to ‘sense’. ‘Sense’ is

what is traced through the response to what is other and prior to self, in other words, what does not coincide with self, that is, the self's designations. The work done by 'sense', the approach of the 'new' or singularly other, involves an infinite work never commensurate with the self, conditioned by the exposure of the body and its temporalisation of time. *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence* designates this work of 'sense' as resistance to the "multiplication of the identical" (29) that characterises thematisation. Sense is on this account inseparable from 'sensibility' and the manner in which a singular individual is expressive in his situation of exposure, and in the response to this exposure. In Levinas, the exposure or corporeal orientation of the individual is the condition for the ethical relation and the constitution of ethical subjectivity. Levinas brings it all back to the face-to-face relation, conditioned by an expression based in the body, that is, a different manifestation than that of the 'world'. The resonances or reverberations of expression inform the themes and history of discursive knowledge and ontology which has tended to forgetfulness of the "silent resonance of the essence" (46), different from the essence or discursive truth. Levinas's 'Saying' is expression, or rather the expressiveness of 'expression' as commonly understood. Otherness and the reception of or response to otherness, are terms and signs of a corporeal orientation, which eludes the act of intentionality and the themes of visible manifestation. Saying, according to Levinas, makes "signs of this very signifyingness of the exposure; it is to expose the exposure instead of remaining in it as an act of exposing" (143). Here lies the significance of expression or the corporeal orientation, which relates the work of Levinas to Michaux's. The work of both expresses the reality of exposure in which alterity renders the particular individual expressive and a sign/Saying without 'dissipating the opacity' (29) of the relation between sense and the expression of alterity. The 'opacity' remains in so far as expression is conditioned by the temporality and sensibility of corporeal orientation. Temporality and sensibility come to be synonymous here. Michaux's work on mescaline in the 1950s and 60s explores the particular expression according to which temporality and sensibility become synonymous. The point for Levinas as well as Michaux is to trace a broad sense of language in which the expression of alterity is given significance. Alterity is given significance, not according to an expression of signs given (in the given) but of the immediacy of a giving of signs whose expression/expressivity emerges from a

sensible situation. Levinas's as well as Michaux's works are attuned to the particular sense of 'expression' which emerges through this situation. In *Totality and Infinity* there is a section called 'Expression is the Principle'. *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*, as much as the former work, emphasises the corporeal situation of exposure and vulnerability as a condition for the revelation rather than disclosure of expression, in as much as expression is inseparable from the giving and deliverance of signs (TI 92).

Michaux's experiments with mescaline can be read as heightened experiences of an expression of sensibility. The experiments with mescaline make up a significant portion of Michaux work, and become one of these 'terrains to carry out a life', one of heightened sensibility. The couplet of 'expression' and 'expressivity' in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza can be related to Michaux's as well as Levinas's investigations into the relationship between manifestation and the formation of subjectivity. Expression is 'the principle' which lets manifestation occur and vice versa, insofar as manifestation is understood according to a different phenomenality, as pointed out by Michel Henry. Expression and manifestation work according to circuits of affectivity.

The principle of expression works according to the expression's folding in upon itself, that is, according to an anterior 'expressivity' pertaining to the subjective body. Levinas argues that manifestation turns into an expression, "a skin left desolate by an irreversible departure" and adds: "expressions, saying, is *not added on to* significations that are 'visible' in the light of phenomena"²⁴. He speaks of an irretrievable delay of the said after the saying. The significations of the former absorb the latter in its thematisations, which bear only a trace of the significance of saying²⁵. The interruption of the said by the saying is the resonance of an expressivity of the subjective body, the trace of which is contested and effaced in discursive knowledge or what Henry designates as the 'theory of thought'. Ultimately, the significance of the couplet expression and expressivity lies with a particular dynamic – and for Levinas ethical – conception of the meaning of being and subjectivity. This conception permits these resonances of meaning to interrupt the

²⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, ed. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987) p. 69. My emphasis.

²⁵ See *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 69.

entrapment of meaning in a static thematisation, which reduces the singular, dynamic 'life' to a general category or 'object for thought'.

What Levinas calls the 'infinite' of the other, or 'face', exceeds any particular figurality or 'image' of otherness. The infinite significance of the face, its infinite work on (ethical) subjectivity, refers to a physicality – the singular Other – but not one that can be figurally represented, or contained by a representational image of otherness. That is because representation projects otherness *from* subjectivity. In this sense, the ethical relation is one that is 'beyond image'²⁶. Its dynamic is indissociable from the folding of expression/expressivity, which proceeds from the subjective body rather than 'the self'. Michaux describes the approach of otherness under mescaline as a "spectacle... *inflicted on* rather than offered to [the eyes]" (ER 52, my emphasis). Mescaline leaves him with the awareness of the potential of the subjective body as open to "invasion... this dynamic, unlike a painting or a coloured surface or even a coloured aspect one might want to gaze upon, was a response, the reaction of some nerve buried deep in the optic channels that had been aggressed, victimized (the spectacle of colours is secondary)" (52). Michaux's experiments with the hallucinogen demonstrate the exposure and vulnerability of the corpo-real situation always already prior to self²⁷. The explosion of colours effected by the drug is "taking place in violation of my own integrity. Without so wanting to, I was involved in colour fabrication... an awesome infinity of photons, but without light...and...without photons" (52). Anterior to the intentional self, the situation of embodiment creates, or lives through, a corpo-real, which always already informs the contents of forms projected by the intentional self upon 'the world'. Mescaline points

²⁶ Insofar as intentionality seems to imply a transparency in the relation of image to object, Levinas rejects this type of 'signification'. According to Levinas, the intentional 'image' detracts from the reality of singular being. Michaux's work repeats this rejection for the singularity of the corpo-real, in-dividual signification neither presented as image nor object.

²⁷ The similarity of Michaux's descriptions of passivity and exposure and Levinas's notion of 'subjection' to otherness is striking. Levinas says in *Otherwise than Being* that the vulnerability that marks the relation to the other is something that happens 'on the surface of the skin, at the edge of the nerves' (15) and so emphasises the relation and the meaning of the trace according to circuits of dynamism, affectivity and emotion. Michaux's art explores the Levinas's notion of proximity, outside 'social' or 'ontological' parameters.

Michaux to the in-visible reality of a corporeal affectivity and the reality of an expression not reducible to the intentions and projects of the self.

While experiments regarding the heightened sense experiences effected by hallucinogens are nothing new, in literary or other contexts, the dedication to the effects of the drug witnessed in Michaux's work is of a quite unusual kind. When Michaux states that he paints in order to 'decondition himself', it involves quite explicitly a rejection of the conception of 'the meaning of the world' made visible by the 'conditioned' self. In Michaux's work is detectable a similar move from meaning to sense that marks the 'ethical relation' in Levinas. The significance of the face is inflicted on, and interrupts, the coherence of the phenomenological reduction of the 'self'. Michaux describes a differently reduced self, an orientation by the body titillated as a nerve in the dark (58). This situation expresses images firstly as "responses... energies... skin-pricks" (58). That is, the subjective body is exposure to a sense, or signification, which is in excess of the 'present' contained in the correlations of 'self' and 'world'. When Levinas speaks of the 'absolute experience' as revelation, not disclosure, and describes it as a "coinciding of the expressed with him who expresses" (TI 66), this is not an argument for a 'continuity' in Merleau-Ponty's sense, but for a precondition of the reception of sense/otherness in the orientation and affectivity of the subjective body. What Levinas argues is that the ethical relation opens up a space of 'sense' not recognised by philosophy's emphasis on intellection and intentionality. Michaux speaks of a similar opening up of a space of responses to otherness. "Space occupied, overoccupied, by an endlessly renewed occupation, space teeming with new arrivals" (60). Levinas, as well as Michaux, describes a dynamic being of a corporeal orientation, which is dissociable from a classic 'materialism'. The work of both highlight the signification involved in the 'energetic' life of the subjective body, its importance with regard to the reception of an otherness not reducible to the generality of a representational concept or 'image' of thought. "Unbelievable how ['new arrivals'] turned up on the blank space from all sides... I could not have followed them with my pencil, not even in the smallest corner of the page" (60). Michaux turns to drawing in consequence of this particular orientation of the body, heightened by mescaline. Michaux's painting follows the traces of "the vibratorium" of

an experience that goes “well beyond visualization... less seen than evident”, a “felt” experience or “sensation of presence” (64). Michaux traces the lines of this experience, in the expression of a rhythm, “a phenomenon of repetition – attenuated, uncontrollable”, the expression of a pattern of lines “animated by a life all their own” (64). For Michaux, the graphics of ink drawings is an attempt to translate this life, as it eludes the intentional self²⁸: “These I rendered partially – perhaps because they had so struck me, or because of my repeated failures to fight them off and master them” (64). The affectivity of the subjective body produces a situation in which the object eludes the self. The object has “ceased to be objective, ceased to be stable” (65). The drawings are testament to the situation in which the subjective body operates as energetic materiality:

Where stability had once reigned there was now only flux, a flux indiscriminately traversing both the firmest and most supple of substances, a flux not unlike those cosmic particles which traverse the earth without cease, without ever slowing down. All measure lost, all dimensionality – all definition cancelled (65).

Michaux’s experiments with drawing demonstrate the impossibility of a full, exhaustive circumscription of an ‘object for thought’, the ‘object’ is ever subject to new elongations (66). The graphic trace involves a disappearance or withdrawal of the object as well as objectivity; this withdrawal *of the trait* is its “own impulse” (66).

Construction of the Infinite. In the absence of which, Constitution. Graphic epitome of an overall – and highly metaphysical – situation (68).

The positioning for, or as, affectivity points to the meta-physical situation of the approach of the otherness of the Other. Michaux describes a painting that “comes from forgetting oneself and what it is one sees or might see” (68). The point is that this painting, or drawing rather, allows an expression of this otherness of the Other, or “*its* particular place

²⁸ The immanence of this ‘Life’ is described in Michaux according to “ever-receding depths of the indefinitely differentiated, yet always remaining within unity, given the overall rhythm of the repetition” (ER 68). Deleuze describes immanence, as a life, according to the infinite repetitions of intensities, the *élan* or energetic materiality, which informs our being. See chapter three.

in the World” (68, my emphasis). Michaux’s statement towards the end of his project in *Emergences-Resurgences* sums up a condition of embodiment, the effects of which renders the response of drawing in a way similar to that argued by Derrida in his *Memoirs*. It concerns the particular relation between the subjective body and the logic of the *trait*.

I have painted in order to render the world more ‘re-markable’, all the while refusing behavioural ‘realism’ – or that of ideas. What I thus opened up on the one side, I kept closed on the other. *Signs*, my first and foremost quest. The world *reduced* to a minimum. There are those who reduce the world to intelligibility, which is to reject it in part – witness those whose cast of mind is abstract, ever more abstract, ever more repressed. But the world is in fact heavy, thick, encumbering (76).

Michaux’s descriptions of the ‘thickness’ of the world do not express continuity between self and world, but refer to the extent to which this world – in so far as the particularity of an-other has a place in it – is not rendered spectacularly. The concrete, singular encounter with the other is not encountered in the spectacular, or on the spectacular’s “terrain” (77). Michaux describes the dis-appearance of the *trait* in the faces which accost him. Thus, “[m]ore than their features, it was their evanescence that accosted me”, the “eyes, shot through with another world” (82). Michaux’s drawings under the influence of mescaline attempt to bring to the fore, to the greatest possible extent, the ‘expressivity of expression’, the being at one with an experience as being for an Other, in the awareness of otherness. These drawings attempt to record experience, as the awareness of otherness, without mediation. In graphic expression, Michaux’s art approaches total immediacy according to a movement not directed by the self. The rhythms expressed on canvas are the rhythms of the subjective body in its exposure to what is other than self. The graphic expression taps into a continuous life of the body beneath our perceptions, which always already in-forms perception. The life of the body in Michaux is expressed as a sort of seismographic current which is always there, but which is under normal circumstances im-perceptible according to the intentional act. Abrasive to the world determined

according to perceptive intention, tapping into the awareness of otherness, which pertains to the situation of the subjective body, Michaux's graphic art expresses a forgetfulness of egoic subjectivity – double genitive. In this sense, the orientation of such expressivity is disinterested. "Expressivity" points to an infinite aspect or quality of this *life*; it is not meant to express an other world as we usually understand this phrase, but the infinite in the apparently finite.

II (a). The Displacement of Interest: *Spaced, Displaced* and the Dispositions of the Self

Michaux's work overall engages in a critical account of the legacy of representational discourse. Like Derrida's descriptions of the drawings in *Memoirs*, they say something about what is bypassed in the legacy of representation. A prevalent characteristic of Michaux's work is the recourse to the work of the body in relation to the position of the self. His work disputes the static stability of the self in so far as it is identified with mind, and probes the reality of a 'Bergsonian vision', an "authentic mobility; *élan vital*, pure impetus traveling, not to go anywhere or vanish into its destination, but simply to replenish itself and perpetuate departure"²⁹. Peter Broome points out the extent to which time in Michaux is "massively enlarged... beyond any controllable *frame* of mind... a lurch beyond images, visual and mental, as they are outpaced and erased by the abstraction of sheer movement"³⁰. When Derrida, in *Memoirs*, argues how the artworks in question perform a 'cancellation of sight', he points to the reality of the body as what does not appear to us according to the 'transcendental illusion of the ego', in the light of the world. That is, the departure from the tradition of representational knowledge, and its

²⁹ Peter Broome, "Introduction", in Henri Michaux, *Spaced, Displaced* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1992), p. 32.

³⁰ Peter Broome, "Introduction", p. 32.

modeling of the 'world' according to 'evidential insight', bases this 'faith' in a negation of the relation between time and the 'intense' non-objectifiable reality of the body. I emphasise that the temporality of the body informs the dispositions of the self to the extent that it performs its displacement. Michaux's work recognises the instability and fragility of the self in so far as it is subject to the specific temporality of the body.

The visual works in particular demonstrate the body as such as what 'cannot be thought'. Dis-appearance in the works translates 'empathetically' this non-thought of thought. In tapping into this empathetic work, which is of the body, Michaux effects a positioning of the self, which repeats the receptivity of the subjective body. As his work explores the idea of positions of the body and states of mind, it testifies to their continual effacement. For Michaux, the "SELF is merely a point of equilibrium"³¹, subject to continual displacement according to circuits of affectivity, or the temporality of the subjective body. Form in Michaux is replaced by manner; the frameworks of the mind and of representation are inadequate to the modes of the body. The explorations of traces and their development as signs attempt to express the transitory reality of these modes and the affections, which in-form the self.

The self, an elastic being there in this simplified figure
in conjunction with a stupendous ballistic force unknown,
measureless, never slowing³².

The self is not reducible to a 'point of equilibrium', or intentionality, but is subject to a *force of creativity*. The point is not to 'neutralise' the position of subjectivity, as in the work of the 'image' of representation, but to demonstrate the manner in which positioning must be considered according to the body. This is precisely the point made by Derrida with regard to the point of view. Michaux's work expresses the extent to which the individual must be 'able to transcend his form and his syntactical link with a world',

³¹ *Plume*, p. 213. Quoted in Peter Broome, "Introduction", p. 40.

³² Henri Michaux, *Spaced, Displaced*, p. 181.

in the tracing of the extent to which 'a non-organic life burns us'³³. The expressivity of the body, its orientation, coincides with perception. In this sense, the real is that which creates what it perceives or *conceives*. Michaux's work demonstrates the dispositions of the self in regard to his art as originating in sensibility. The move towards the drawing of that which animates the life of human being, betrays the orientation of the body – non-objectifiable. Language begins with sensibility, but is not adequate to it. The logic of the *trait*, and the performative withdrawal of the graphic sign, is testament to this fact.

Fixedly stared at, the eyes unswerving... a form which more and more
abstracts itself. As if detached from there propelled without restraint
by an ever more extreme release, soon beyond any horizon
beyond everything into a seemingly stellar space but without visible stars
without landmarks anywhere³⁴.

The body as such cannot 'be thought'. Thought is 'a phenomenon which betrays a spirit – its frame or form – and that which this frame intended'³⁵. The correspondence or correlation is what is important in the intentional act, but the subject-matter is necessarily in excess of this framework. The demarcations of 'the world' work on the premise that the self orders meaning, manages the object. Michaux's descriptions of the dispositions of the self in the subjective body refute the exhaustive tendencies of this premise. For Michaux, as for Levinas, the priority of this tendency of thought reduces the other in the Other. The experience of otherness is negated in the categorisations and conceptualisations performed according to objectivising consciousness. In "A Crowd Come Out of the Dark", Michaux describes how his "life as a spectator" is assaulted by a life pertaining to the sensibility of the body, a 'physical depth' of being. According to his sleeping self, "the film and my own trembling were dramatically combined, the screen was invaded by my physiology, the spectator and the spectator's impaired vision were

³³ See Gilles Deleuze, LS, p. 178.

³⁴ Henri Michaux, *Spaced, Displaced*, p. 183.

³⁵ Henri Michaux, *Un Barbare en Asie*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967) p. 37. I have modified the translation.

confused”³⁶. The point made here is that of the effect on the in-formation of vision by the condition of being affected and affecting as a body. Michaux’s art acknowledges that perception is not synonymous with understanding, but that perception coincides rather with a certain expressivity of the particular body to produce the real. The artist’s engagement in the world as subjective body conceives outside act-intentionality and object-manifestation. The ‘intense’ awareness of otherness expressed in Michaux art must be understood according to corpo-real positioning or orientation.

(b) Orientation, Dis-Interested Thought

A certain orientation with regard to thought is expressed in the drawings according to the infinite, probing line, without arrival in ‘meaning’. The movement of sense is infinite; the temporality of the body is always ahead, out in front, like ‘antennas’ on Derrida’s description. In *Ideograms in China*, Michaux emphasises the perfect ‘writing’ as open to the life of the body according to its signs. The calligraphy of his drawings has this openness as they express the gesture involved in the giving and receiving of signs. They express a dynamism not found in linguistics’ ‘syntactical link with the world’. Michaux argues for the relevance of reducing being to signified – or im-mediate – being. “No longer imitate nature, but signify nature. By strokes, darts, dashes”³⁷. That is, by ‘traits’, *élans*, ‘ascesis of the immediate’. According to *Ideograms*, the Chinese language ‘does not draw conclusions of its own, but lets itself be read’, the ‘meager syntax’ opens to a creative response, ‘out of the multiple comes the idea’. Michaux’s art approaches ‘that most difficult point’, according to Merleau-Ponty, “that is, the point between the flesh and the idea” (VI 179). He develops “writing” or drawing fertilised by the processes of energetic materiality, which marks the situation of being a body, for thought.

³⁶ Henri Michaux, *Spaced, Displaced*, p. 51-52.

³⁷ Henri Michaux, *Ideograms in China*.

The gesture involved in the body's response to and giving of signs must be understood pre-intentionally and pre-semiotically, that is 'beyond meaning'. Levinas's notion of face – or *visage* – defined as the manner in which the other presents beyond manifestation on the classical account, gives an account of man's signification or expressivity in so far as 'man' is infinitely other, *Autrui*. *Autrui*, as *visage*, is prior to semiotics and prior to 'figural' meaning. In the "infinity of his transcendence", the Other, according to an-other phenomenality, "resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial expression" (TI 199). The Other thus makes of 'the work', even the work of art as expressed in Michaux, a "profitless investment" (TRO 350). The autosignification of the face refers to language understood in the broad sense, in active surplus to the linguistic presuppositions of act intentionality and object manifestation as thematised by classical phenomenology.

Levinas's notion of *le visage d'Autrui*, Henry's argument regarding the reduction of language in consequence of the 'ontological monism' of classical phenomenology, and Deleuze's logic of expression all point to an excess of sensibility which questions 'interest' as the motor of language and thought. The conceptions of an expressivity or Life in excess of language, in the narrow sense, interrupt the thought of a being reduced to the abstractions of Being for ego-consciousness. My argument is that these propositions represent a difference in thought, located as forgetfulness immanent to its language. This is what Henry designates as the theory of thought.

When Levinas speaks of the relation between expression and response/responsibility as "the ethical condition or essence of language" (TI 200), language exceeds the speech-act situation and discursive language generally. Ethical language has its condition in the individual's orientation in a corporeal sense. It involves an Other, but is not reduced to the Other's presence. That is, it concerns the manner in which one responds as a singular individual to the singularity of expression understood in terms of an expressivity, which preserves otherness in communication. The notion of *visage* does not denote the presence and visibility of an Other, it speaks of the expressivity which marks the Life or singularity of the subjective body. In Levinas, the notion of proximity becomes an alternative to visibility, and speaks of a transcendence of the singular being, as it exceeds

my consciousness. Levinas's specific notion of transcendence refers precisely to the sense of immanent genesis I expound in this work by bringing together specific premises of Derrida's, Deleuze's and Henry's thought, in a certain proximity to Levinas. Levinas states: "illumination that would allow for an 'act of consciousness'... is precisely the visibility of the same to the same, which is sometimes called openness" (OB 30). According to my argument, immanent genesis is conditioned by an openness which is not an access to the visible object for consciousness, but is understood according to energetic materiality. Openness refers to a dimension of exteriority, or 'world' without objects. Michaux's art approaches this 'worldlessness', or exteriority not reducible to the 'other in me'. His art presents things according to their materiality, not as representations for thought. Levinas asks about the ontological significance of "materiality itself"³⁸. My argument is that beyond the materialisation of being which is the Levinasian *il y a*, an anonymity of being which anticipates the ethical forgetfulness of ego-consciousness, Levinas explores the material sense of being a singular bodily being according to a notion of energetic materiality similar to that of Deleuze. The reality of the ethical relation in Levinas is affectivity, the awareness of immanent genesis.

There is a specific aesthetic evident in Levinas, as well as Henry and Deleuze, regarding an energetic materiality. While the aesthetic in Levinas at times appear to be alien to the ethical³⁹, the orientation of his work on the question of art is 'twofold' rather than contradictory. The '*problem* of aesthetics' in Levinas is reducible to the aesthetic linked to the emphasis on 'the visible' and the violence inherent in its exclusive politics of knowledge, the translatability of the 'image' for/according to consciousness. However, the former aesthetic must be seen as *inseparable* from Levinas's ethics of signification and the face⁴⁰. This aesthetic has accordingly less to do with forms of art, as when Gerald

³⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow", in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 8, cited in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 212.

³⁹ The earlier works on art seem to support the 'anti-aesthetics' of Levinas's philosophy, such as the 1949 essay "Reality and its Shadow". See Levinas, in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, pp. 1-14. However, the position of the aesthetic in Levinas is more complex.

Bruns points out the “emancipation of singularity from the reduction to an order of things”⁴¹ in Cubism, or with asking the question of what forms of art have more or less value according to a Levinasian view of art. Levinas’s aesthetics has less to do with the ontological status of art than with signification and ‘expressivity’, according to ‘energetic materiality’, that is, affective being. Michaux’s art should be seen less as art than as an aesthetics approaching this energetic materiality and orientation in corporeal Life. The aesthetic and the ethical as outlined in the works of Levinas, as well as Henry and Deleuze, take up a specific position with respect to cognitive discourse. The *orientation* of the thought of these writers taps into a different communication based in sensibility and a language in excess of cognition, “the language of the eyes, impossible to dissemble” (TI 66). The aesthetic and the ethical come together according to this orientation, before the ego-subject, which experiences the world spectacularly, as *of vision*. The point of view, or the *point* of orientation, is ‘blind’. Accordingly, the position of the self must be understood with respect to anterior circuits of affectivity. Thought is informed beyond interest; it emerges from affectivity or sensibility, a corporeal awareness or orientation – in Levinas’s terms, proximity.

⁴⁰Furthermore, as is well known, Derrida points out in his two essays on Levinas, that Levinas’s specific philosophical language imports resonance and repetition in what becomes akin to aesthetic/artistic practice in order to take traditional philosophical conceptualisation outside ontological finitude. See for example “Violence and Metaphysics”, in *Writing and Difference*, p. 312.

⁴¹ Gerald Bruns, “The concepts of art and poetry in Emmanuel Levinas’s writings” in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, p. 212.

Conclusion

'Out of the multiple comes the idea' says Michaux in *Ideograms in China*. That thought originates from the sensible is a presumption shared by the undeniably diverse thought I engage here as a particular reception of classical phenomenology. The premise of this thesis has been that the specific problematisations of phenomenological beginnings, which variously mark this reception, reorient thought to its origins in the 'multiple', or the body. 'The body' is thought according to *sensibility*, the designation of 'the multiple' according to the singularity or Life of the 'subjective body'. The specific critiques of the French reception approach the question of language in a broad sense, according to a notion of signification inseparable from the orientation of the body in a corporeal rather than representational sense. Michaux's art, as exploration of and testament to the work of the body, takes up the notion of an energetic materiality according to the affective body. His body of work shows the extent to which the subjective body disrupts the supposed linearity of 'interested' or intentional thought. The 'line of thought' in Michaux does not 'arrive' in 'meaning', but traces a sense or signification inseparable from the infinite work of the body: it is testament to a different manifestation than that of representational objectivity and takes precedence with regard to acts of intentionality. Sense-formation is traced in his works outside self-present consciousness, and the latter's specific delineation of the subject-object relation. 'Sense' is not accessible according to the mediation of 'essential insight', but is testament to affective being, or signification as 'profitless investment', or the investment of the body. His art draws out the processes of energetic materiality marking the situation of bodily sensibility in face of thought. His art thus presents a challenge to the mediated and representational presumptions of thought. Michaux's verbal as well as his visual works take up the question of the position of thought and demonstrate that its origins are inseparable from the orientations of the body, or 'the multiple'. While the body as such cannot be thought, his art demonstrates the imperative that thought is approached according to the situation of the body. This thesis has deemed the body of classical phenomenology to be a body subjected in a specific sense, suspended according to the schematics of phenomenological scientism and

determination, or the specific 'inter-esse' of this thought. The body suspended, the body of thought, is the *subjective* body.

The singularity of affective being is a forgotten premise in object-oriented thought and leads to unsustainable reductions. This thesis has pointed out, through the reading of the manner in which these various French critiques approach the 'problem of the body' according to a phenomenological problematic, that Being is in excess of being-object for thought and *concerns* the Life of the body before thought. The subjective body is marked by its 'original transcendental content' and represents as such what is other to thought and what necessarily escapes its determinations in classical phenomenology. The contention of Michel Henry is that this specific forgetfulness is a condition for this thought, but necessarily reduces experience to its own theoretical determinations. Michel Henry sees the way out of this impasse according to thought's reorientation towards a different conception of phenomenality and language. 'Manifestation' of sense exceeds object-manifestation: it is born(e) by signification irreducible to acts of intentionality and 'visibility'/eidetic insight. While Michel Henry does base this reorientation in phenomenology in what is undeniably a problematic account of self-manifestation, it is necessary to see his claims in terms of the notion of sensibility and subjective body that support this reorientation. As this thesis argues, it is vital in order to approach the significance of the body's work with regard to thought, that the body is not reduced in thought to its representational content. The body needs to be approached according to the singularity of its affective being, the manner in which it in-forms thought. The various approaches to this issue in phenomenology with which this thesis engages, shows that the forgetfulness of the body and 'what a body can do' is immanent to the language of thought. This language is based in the subjection of this body. What Henry's criticism of 'ontological monism' brings to the fore is that thought always thinks more than it thinks; that is, thought is always in excess of the 'theory of thought'. These arguments open up a space to reconsider the relationship between the language of thought and the body. Since the body cannot be thought as anything but the subjective singular body, this calls for a conception of language in a specifically broad sense, conditioned by the signification pertaining to the life of the subjective body and its position in a corporeal sense. We must

look at how this position, which is always already the situation of thought, *affects* thought. The original transcendental content of the subjective body in-forms thought and its effects are not reducible or suspendable, but must be taken into account in the discourse of philosophy. This specific reception of Husserlian phenomenology calls for precisely such reorientation toward the transcendental significance pertaining to the situation of being a body in thought, that is, towards the reality of immanent genesis.

Is this preoccupation with a subjected body of thought important? Does the reality of immanent genesis in-form thought in a significant manner that needs to be adequately accounted for? This thesis starts from the premise that what a body does and can do is important to the extent that its subjection appears to be a premise of the specific tradition of thought that culminates in the methodological premises of classical phenomenology. Deleuze points out the necessity that we “[distinguish] between things and their simulacra... [it is] a question of making the difference, thus of operating in the depths of the immediate (DR 60). The ‘problem of the body’ as a forgotten premise of thought is that the singularity of experience, *by the situation of being a body*, becomes reduced *according to* the generality of the concept in thought. Corporeal signification is immediate, and is necessarily uncontainable in thought. Forgetfulness of the situation of being a body leads thought to relate to the body – or the otherness of self-awareness – by bracketing off this original (transcendental) content, that is, the body is reduced to its representational content. The other of thought is reduced to what falls outside its theoretical determination, while ‘the other’ becomes recognisable to thought according to the generality of a concept. In so far as this specific orientation of thought speaks in terms of its concepts, ‘the world’ is reduced to what appears in the light of its designations, in a thought absolutely present to itself. The critique by the French tradition engaged in this thesis reorients thought away from its designation in ‘the world’ of objects or ‘objective’ determination and identifies a certain failure and danger in its thematisation of ‘the world’: the other of thought is ultimately referable to it. Whether we consider the human or the infinite other – what is always already other to thought – otherness must be approached in its singularity, that is, according to a body which is not reducible to thought. Levinas points out that the language of thought, or the conceptuality or

generality its propositions, is disrupted or redirected by the face-to-face language of the other's address. Whether this address is conceived as a signification expanding our notion of language or as linguistic language imbued with an excess of meaning, it is not reducible to the language of thought or classical phenomenological determination.

Levinas's reorientation with regard to Alterity calls for a move from 'meaning' to 'sense'. Derrida designates a "writing" which precisely identifies this excess of signification/sense against the determinations of 'arrived meaning', in excess of thought. Both Levinas and Derrida emphasise the effect of the *trace* in its withdrawal of *itself* from presence and thus shed light on the corporeality of that which cannot be retained in memory and disrupts self-presence. The notion of an immemorial past that has never been present to consciousness in the purity of self-presence points to the fact that there is signification 'of itself', or genesis outside phenomenological consciousness and the designations of the language of thought. Levinas's conception of the other in the Other, irreducible to its referral to my 'consciousness of' the other in the concept, marks or makes up/creates the corporeal significance of the other's 'face' as the trace which is its own withdrawal and a withdrawal from thought or theoretical assignation. The corporeality of the 'face', as what signifies of itself, cannot be reduced to thought's approach to it, but approaches thought. The (notion of) face presents a challenge to thought in the singularity of its corporeal significance, always in excess of thoughts assignation. It is the argument of this thesis that this challenge is relevant in regarding the 'politics' of thought, the presumptions that generate its politics of concealing and unconcealing a specific 'world'.

The inadequate account of the body-subject in relation to thought in classical phenomenology is consequent on an inadequate probing of the issue of signification, as Derrida points out. Signification, and by extension language, must be approached according the body placed outside thought: the corpo-real and an account of immanent genesis. Deleuze makes an important contribution to this critique in that he recognises and emphasises that we 'do not yet know what a body can do'. Thought needs to reorient itself towards an exploration of the significance of the body and embodied thought.

This call for a reorientation means that thought become aware of its position, *its* orientation or 'interests'. The critique of classical phenomenology undertaken by way of these specific approaches to thought as such, takes up the traditional metaphysical concerns of the forms and conditions of knowledge and representation and the foundations for relations of subjects and objects in/of thought. The reorientation concerns the reality of a genesis that operates (as the) outside of thought. That genesis eludes the classical forms of mediated representation, the assimilation of 'the world' as a body of knowledge, suggests that principles of creation are irreducible to representational content. When Levinas speaks of 'ethics as first philosophy' this does not imply a substitution of philosophy for ethics, but reorientation within philosophical practice as such: philosophy problematises its orientation. The question posed here is not that of the transcendence or 'immanence of' thought, or the conceptualisations of philosophy, but of the relation between immanence and transcendence in thought. The reorientation posed by the above critiques might warrant the objection that they merely substitute for classical conceptualisation an absolute principle in the notion of immanent genesis. The present work argues that the issue is more complex than that. The 'absolutism' of the Deleuzian creative principle, the expressivity of creation as such – of virtuality; of Levinas's alterity; of Henry's 'essence', which is difficult to separate from its theological implication of an absolute being, indivision, unity and homogeneity – all these approaches to what has been identified here as a principle of immanent genesis, work against the charge of absolutism on the basis of one qualification. It is the argument of this thesis that what negotiates the apparent impasse of 'absolutism' is that these reorientations think immanent genesis according to affective being, that is, as based in the life of the subjective body. The *singularity* of this body is its *sensibility*, the particularity of affect. Genesis, as a certain autonomy and creation of transcendental content by the body, is not 'related' in principles of mediation or representational categories, but manifests differently. The affective or subjective body is not a given meaning, does not relate through an objective for thought; it signifies or is expressive in itself. The general gist of this reception of phenomenology attributes the principle of immanent genesis to its involvement with the body, as the subjective body: a vital affective reality of the body is

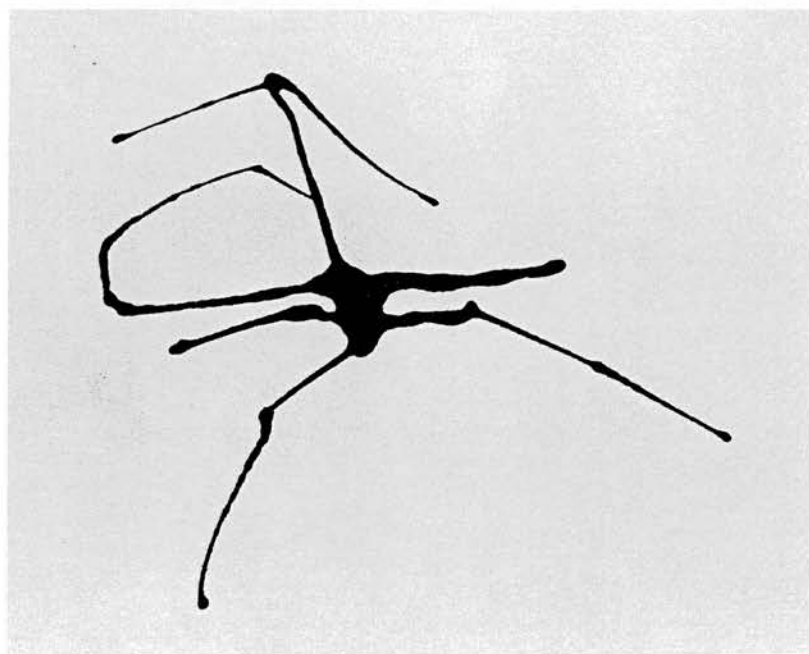
already a content of thought, but does not appear in the light of classical phenomenology. Thus classical phenomenology represents that tendency in thought to subsume corporeality and particularity in the generality of its conceptualisations. The critique works against such subsuming generality.

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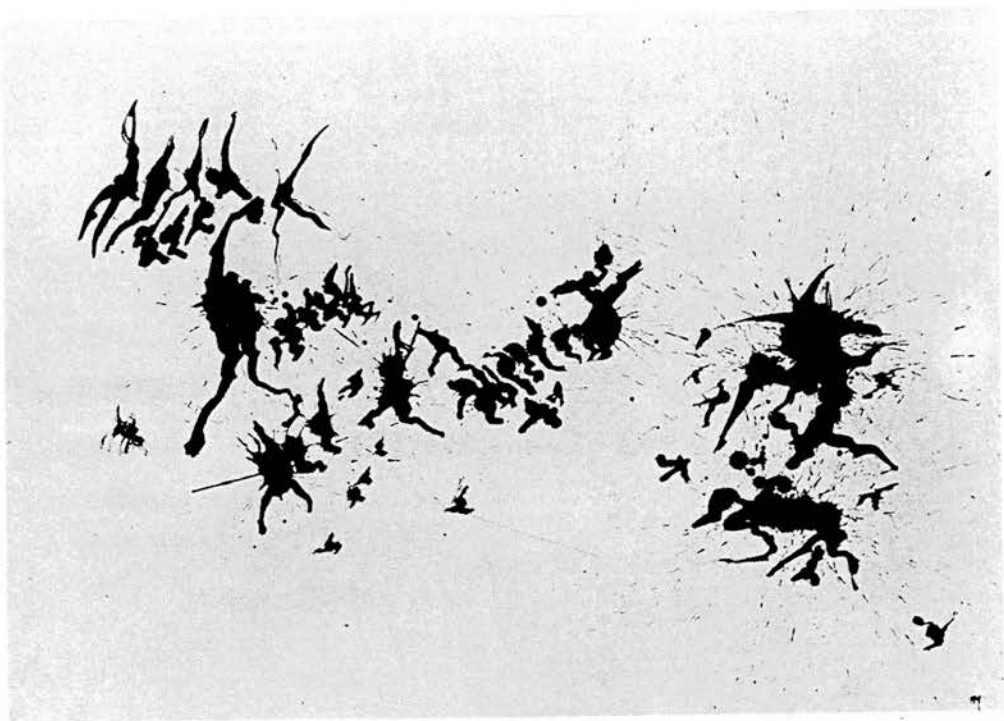
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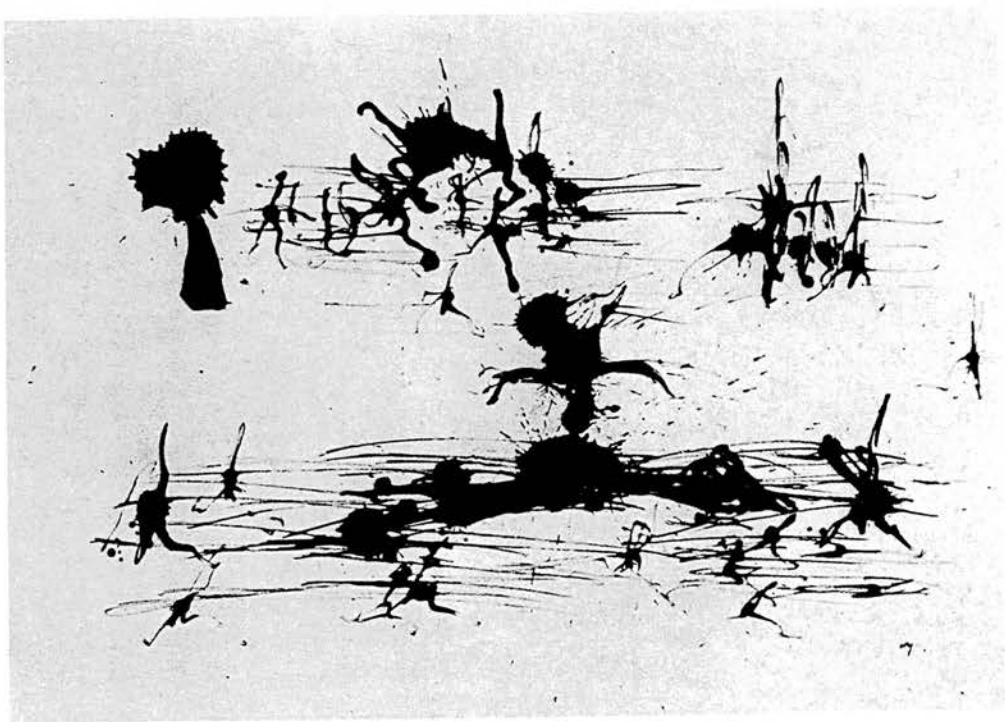


Untitled (Mouvements), 1950. Indian ink on paper, 12 5/8 x 9 7/8 in. (32 x 25 cm).
Private collection.

Untitled, c. 1950. Ink on paper, 9 7/16 x 12 5/8 in. (24 x 32 cm).
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Untitled, 1954. Indian ink on paper, 29 1/2 x 41 5/16 in. (75 x 105 cm).
Collection of G. and P. Brache, Paris.



Untitled, 1956. Indian ink on paper, 27 9/16 x 40 9/16 in. (70 x 103 cm).
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